Existentialism and Indian Thought

by K. GURU DUTT



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The author, a distinguished Hindu philosopher, attempts in this book, for the first time, to elicit the relationship between Existentialism and Indian thought. A concise survey introduces European existentialism from its origin to the present time. The body of the book is occupied with the background of Indian thought, pointing out analogies as well as opposing views prevalent among the philosophical schools of the East and those of contemporary existentialism.

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and Indian Thought

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PREFACE

Many excellent expositions of the Existentialist position are available in English. The author has derived great help from them, but is particularly indebted to Emmanuel Mounier's *Existentialist Philosophies*. There would not have been, perhaps, much justification for bringing out this book if it were merely one more summarization. But the author has here aimed at eliciting the relationship between Existentialist ideas and some aspects of Indian thought. In the first two chapters, which briefly review modern Existentialism and its background, the analogies and correspondences have been just indicated by Sanskrit terms juxtaposed in brackets. Their fuller implications have been examined in the third and last chapter: with what success, it is for the reader to judge. It is hoped that the transliteration of Sanskrit is sufficiently clear for ordinary purposes, although it may not satisfy the demands of meticulous scholarship.

K. Guru Dutt



CHAPTER I:

THE BACKGROUND

I

Existentialism is a comparatively recent development in European thought which has created a commotion in philosophical as well as lay circles. There is something disturbing and provocative about it which has made people talk; so full is it of urgent, probing, challenging ideas intimately affecting the individual and his way of living. The most extravagant claims have been put forward in its behalf, on the one hand, on the other it has been the butt for the most devastating criticism. Within the Existentialist camp itself there are marked divisions. Indeed there seem to be as many Existentialist philosophies as there are thinkers and exponents. Above all there is the broad opposition between the Christian and Atheistic branches. But it may be said that, despite differences, Existentialists of whatever shade or complexion have far more in common with each other than they have collectively with other schools of philosophic thought. Our main objective will be to try to elucidate this common ground and to unravel some of the principal strands, although it is highly problematic to what extent such an attempt will be successful, seeing that Existentialism has been interpreted in altogether contradictory ways. On the one hand, its devotees maintain that they have brought philosophy down to earth for the first time in the West. It has been hailed as nothing short of a

prophetic revival, a return of the religious element into a world overridden by materialism. Some regard it only as a new way of preaching Christianity and many notable Christian thinkers recognize it as essentially part of an approach to the inner life. On the other hand, it has been denounced as the onset of a tide of despair and irrationalism, also as a justification for individual libertinism, and a disastrous surrender to nihilism. Existentialism is perhaps all these things and it will be our task to examine how the parts of this jig-saw puzzle fit into each other.

In very general terms, Existentialism may be described as an attempt to reach the inmost core of human existence in a concrete and individual fashion; hence its strong religious bias: whether for or against. It is a reaction against abstractions and systems and it has concerned itself more with "am" than with "is." It is essentially a turning inward, a probing of the layers of the self, in a manful effort to penetrate to the very center if possible. Its remote origins can perhaps be traced backwards to Greece and the Delphic maxim: "Know thyself," and to Socrates. It has to be borne in mind that Socrates was the bearer of the Pythagorean tradition and put himself in opposition to the characteristic Greek attitude of rational objectivity which manifested itself in Ionian science. He was more concerned with the sphere of human values than with the world of natural phenomena. The Stoics and the Neoplatonists continued the same tradition and handed it on to Christianity. In St. Augustine we notice it in its most typical form. For him the ineffability of existence

could only be grasped through "inwardness"; and no "system" could do justice to it. Inwardness was its own intelligible light. Much later, we see St. Bernard, who set out on a crusade against Abelard's systematization of the Faith. This hatred of system forms such a marked feature of Existentialism that we shall have occasion to refer to it frequently. Incidentally, it adds to the difficulties of understanding the subject.

II

The immediate origins go back to Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), the French mathematician, physicist and religious philosopher. Notwithstanding his unique genius and achievements in mathematics and science, he became more and more interested in the problem of human existence. He says:—

> When I commenced the study of man, I saw that these abstract sciences are not suited to man, that I was wandering further from my own state in examining them, than others in not knowing them. . . . I think it is a good thing not to probe the theories of Copernicus; but this. . . . it is vitally important to know whether the soul is mortal or immortal!

To start with, he was sceptical, and the solution offered by traditional Christianity did not appeal to him. But what greatly impressed him and ultimately prepared the ground for his conversion was what modern Existentialists term "the feeling of the fundamental contingency of human existence." We may read in Pascal's own eloquent language what it meant to him:—

> When I consider the tiny span of my life, which is swallowed up in the eternity which precedes and follows it, when

I consider the tiny space that I occupy and can even see, lost as I am in the infinite immensity of Space which I know nothing about and which knows nothing about me, I am terrified and marvel to find myself here rather than there, for there is no reason at all why "here" rather than "there," and why "now" rather than "then.' Who put me there? By whose command and under whose direction were this time and this place destined for me?

Later on, as a result of the famous "accident" in which he was saved from drowning, he was converted, and he became attached to the Christian standpoint with an ecstatic devotion without many parallels. He died at the early age of thirty-nine. He did not expound any system of philosophy, but his reflections are contained in his celebrated *Pensées,* published after his death, which is one of the most profound and moving books in the world's literature. Justifying his manner of expression and contrasting it with the logical order of the intellect, he explains: "The heart has its own order. . . . This order consists chiefly in digressions on each point to indicate the end, and keep it always in sight." And his complaint is: "Men lack heart; they would not make a friend of it."

Pascal's thought is best understood when set against the background of two other great French thinkers: his predecessor Montaigne (1533-1592), the wise and genial sceptic; and Pascal's great contemporary, Descartes (1596-1650). Pascal had much in common with these two men but reacted against each differently. He protests against Descartes as against one who had made too profound a study of science. He condemns Descartes as "useless and uncertain." Descartes was not an atheist,

but Pascal had no use for his lukewarm theism. He says:—

I cannot forgive Descartes. In all his philosophy he would have been quite willing to dispense with God. But he had to make Him give a fillip to set the world in motion; beyond this he has no further need of God.

But, apart from his attitude towards God, Pascal reacted against his rationalistic philosophy. Descartes had enunciated his celebrated dictum—*Cogito, ergo sum*—equating thought with the whole of existence. Pascal would have it exactly the other way round: I am, therefore I think. With his whole being, Pascal opposed the Cartesian formula with its implication that the real is rational and only the rational is real.

On the other hand, Pascal has a passion for the study of the human heart; and in this lies his affinity with Montaigne. Although Montaigne is avowedly a sceptic, Pascal cannot deny himself a grand indulgence in favour of the author of the *Essays*. Montaigne was his real teacher although indirectly, for Pascal says: "It is not in Montaigne that I find everything that I see there, but in myself." Such is the secret bond between these two unlike and yet very like minds that François Mauriac writes: "Every thinking man, even the free-thinker joins Pascal as he joins Montaigne." He goes on: "Pascal . . . utilizes the work of Montaigne . . . to convince unbelievers: It is Pascal who throws Montaigne into the current of redemption." Pascal's distinction was hit upon by Sainte-Beuve when he said, "Pascal possesses to the highest degree of intensity the feeling of the human person."

Pascal's favorite theme is the limitations of reason; but he gives expression to his views with a balance which reminds one of Montaigne. He would avoid both the extremes, neither exclude reason nor admit reason only and make an idol of it. Although yielding to none in the single-mindedness of his quest for God, he is not uncompromising like Kierkegaard with his absolute *Either/Or*. Pascal wrote: "The last proceeding of reason is to recognize that there is an infinity of things which are beyond it. It is but feeble if it does not see so far as to know this." His broad-mindedness permitted him to say: "The principles of the sceptics, stoics, atheists, etc., are true. But their conclusions are false, because the opposite principles are also true." Indeed he does not attach much weight to the fact of logical contradiction:—

> Contradiction is not a sign of falsity, nor the want of contradiction a sign of truth. . . . Every author has a meaning in which all the contradictory passages agree (*samanvaya*) or he has no meaning at all.

Against reason, with its rationality and comprehensibility, he sets faith. Yet his faith is not the polar opposite of the intellect. Here, too, he would avoid extremes whether of subjectivity or objectivity; and his idea of God, the substratum of his faith, is of a synthesis in which contradictions are resolved: "Happiness is neither within us nor without us. It is in God, both within us and without us." He does not deny the intellectual plane, but he considers it the elementary plane of the dialectic of the existent. He is at some pains to point out that the insights of the higher plane do not

invalidate the values of the lower, at its own level. He tells us: "Faith, indeed, tells what the senses do not tell, but not the contrary of what they see. It is above them and not contrary to them." But on the whole he would discourage all intellectual curiosity, which he views as a feverish search for the interesting side of life. As for St. Augustine, so for Pascal it is "that pernicious blitheness, by means of which we depart from Thee." Despite appearances, intellectual curiosity is in reality a form of vital impotence scattering life to the four winds. It is essentially a "diversion." Pascal says: "Without examining every particular pursuit, it is enough to comprehend them under diversion." All diversion is, according to Pascal, lost existence, what some modern Existentialists term "lack of authenticity" and Jean-Paul Sartre calls "falseness."

On the other hand, there is the state of concentration (*ekāgratā*) which is faith and represents true existence. It is not a static condition but one in which the self transcends itself from moment to moment, and in its very nature cannot be fully comprehended. Indeed this incomprehensibility is the special mark of faith. In Pascal's terminology: it is incomprehensible that everything should be incomprehensible. This transcending of comprehensibility is what actually makes the spiritual life possible and is discernible as an internal movement forward, a leap from one order of experience to another. Insights derived through the experience of transcendence can only be expressed in a new way, by what Pascal calls "a sign." Every expression of it in ordinary language is bound to appear ambiguous and

misleading. Hence the fondness of Existential thinkers for the paradox, particularly Kierkegaard, who gives a special spiritual significance to the form itself. Man's relationship to God is the ultimate paradox: God is known as well as unknown. In this perpetual game of hide and seek lies man's highest realization. Pascal writes in *The Mystery of Jesus*: "Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou hadst not found me!"

Pascal's writings achieved an almost immediate fame, which has lasted to the present day. Mauriac says of his genius:—

> The river was to flow underground, across the century of Voltaire and Condorcet, and to reappear with greater power than ever in our own time. After three centuries, Blaise Pascal is still involved in our quarrels; he is alive.

III

He had no successors; and it is after a considerable interval that, in the 19th century, we again come across a French thinker with Existentialist sympathies: Maine de Biran, not much known in his native land, and even less outside. He strove to assert the authority of purposeful existence against the humiliation of man by the sensualist philosophers of the 18th century. His noteworthy contribution to Existentialist thought is a dynamic conception of the self as made up of the effort necessary to hold together the personality in the face of the continual tendency towards disintegration.

It is generally believed that Existential ideas were unknown in England till the recent publication of the translation of the work of an Italian professor de-

nouncing Existentialism. This appears plausible because this line of thought is so foreign to the typical English philosophic temper represented by Locke, Bentham and Mill. It is therefore of great interest for us that that many-sided but ineffective genius, S. T. Coleridge, had anticipated some trends of Existential thought before Kierkegaard. Coleridge was one of those English sympathizers with the early French Revolution who later sought an antidote to French atheism in the philosophy of Kant, with its implication of the centrality of moral problems. Kant postulated the concept of "Practical reason," a kind of moral intuition, a non-rational faculty which could and did dictate Christian morals to every unperverted man. Bertrand Russell says that Leibniz and Kant replanted the Christian tree, which Rousseau watered with his tears.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) stands at the head of the line of modern thinkers who have reminded Rationalists that man is primarily an active, feeling creature and not a thinking machine. Kant as well as his immediate successor, Johann Fichte (1762-1814) were subjective in temperament as well as in doctrine. Bertrand Russell thinks that Kant, and still more Fichte, carried the subjectivist tendency to such an extreme point as seemed almost to involve a kind of insanity. This remark is of value, not so much as an objective and fair estimate, but rather as an indication of Russell's own philosophic bias. However that may be, it has to be borne in mind that Fichte emphasized the fact that action is primary and philosophy secondary. His followers, too, declaring the creative freedom

of the individual, took their philosophy in a practical sense. Fichte combined philosophic idealism with Christian theology. In our present context it is relevant to note that in one of his works he has a lengthy chapter on faith, upholding knowledge arrived at without reason, knowledge automatically prompted by the will to believe, and directed towards moral action.

It has been necessary to recapitulate this background because Coleridge was greatly indebted to German metaphysics, and also because these ideas have influenced later Existentialist thinkers. It is indisputable that Coleridge had started thinking on Existential lines. He clearly drew the distinction between what he called "substantial knowledge" (the intuition of the self, of existence) and "abstract knowledge" (like that of science). He says:—

> By the former, we know that existence is its own predicate self-affirmation, the one attribute in which all others are contained, not as parts but as manifestations. It is an eternal and infinite self-rejoicing, self-loving, with a joy unfathomable, with a love all-comprehensive. It is absolute; the absolute is neither singly that which affirms, nor that which is affirmed; but the identity and living copula of both.

Friedrich von Schelling (1775-1854), to whom Coleridge owed many of his crucial ideas, had in his earlier work put forward the conception of art as the copula or connecting link between transcendental being and human consciousness, implying a nexus between the aesthetic and moral planes. Coleridge's temperament, however, like Kierkegaard's later, rebelled against such an identification. He took his firm stand on the Christian revelation, from which he would not

move. He held that the dialectic of the intellect is "utterly incapable of communicating insight or convictions concerning the existence or possibility of the world as different from Deity." He seems to have been imbued with the characteristic Existential horror of any kind of self-consistent system—that seemed to him a dialectic trick, a mechanical top spinning in nothingness, not touching the human heart.

The following is a sample of Coleridge's appraisal of what may be called the Existential situation:—

> Hast thou ever raised thy mind to the consideration of existence, in and by itself, as the mere act of existing? Hast thou ever said to thyself thoughtfully, It is! heedless in that moment, whether it were a man before thee, or a flower or a grain of sand—without reference in short to this or that mode or form of existence? [*astitva*]. If thou hast indeed attained to this, thou wilt have felt the presence of a mystery, which must have fixed thy spirit in awe and wonder. The very words,—There is nothing! or,—There was a time when there was nothing! are self-contradictory. There is that within us which repels the proposition with as full and instantaneous a light, as if it bore evidence against the fact in the light of its own eternity.
>
> Not to be, then, is impossible: to be, incomprehensible. If thou hast mastered this institution of absolute existence, thou wilt have learnt likewise, that it was this and no other which in the earlier ages seized the nobler minds, the elect among men, with a sort of sacred horror. This it was that first caused them to feel within themselves a something ineffably greater than their individual nature. . . .

Yet in spite of all this, one misses in Coleridge the fatal urgency which marks the Existentialist temper and is to be found in Kierkegaard and others, which lies not so much in the contemplation of the nature of existence as in being inextricably involved in it, and knowing it

from the inside, as a responsible actor and not merely as a spectator. Nor do we find in him those insights deriving from anguish and despair and tormenting doubt, the feeling of crisis and the surmounting of it in conversion and personal revelation, and other unique Existential experiences. Secure in his faith in traditional Christianity, there was no call for him to make those epoch-making decisions and exercises of choice in which one risks all and may lose all. So it is difficult to agree with Herbert Read when he asserts that "before Kierkegaard was born, Coleridge had already formulated the terms of an Existentialist philosophy." Notwithstanding the surprising range of Coleridge's thought, it would perhaps be safer to leave him within the Kantian fold, rather than claim him as one of the pioneers of Existential thought, for after all it is by his influence on subsequent thinkers that we have to judge his place; and his influence was practically nil.

IV

After this diversion, we have to turn to Sören Kierkegaard (1813-1855) the Dane, who was the first to use the term "Existence" in the sense in which we are considering it and who has justly been regarded as the founder of Existentialism. Unlike Pascal, he was, for long, little known outside his own country and had to wait for recognition abroad till the beginning of the present century when his works were first translated into other European languages, especially English. Today his reputation stands very high indeed and some of his admirers would maintain that in dialectical ability

he is little inferior to Plato. Pascal was a Catholic and even in his most impassioned writing we find that Catholicism which is the mark of France. Kierkegaard was a Protestant in the most fundamental sense of the term. He was an aggressive individualist and his Protestantism is of that type which Santayana described as "philosophic egotism raised to the highest power." Yet his sincerity and profundity are both undeniable. He used his remarkable dialectical power in one continual protest against the established Church, the State, institutions, system, against Hegel as the most obnoxious representative of system, against routine, against natural man, against things and objectivity, against the historical and temporal view of man, against Humanism, against the universal, against the intellect itself; in short, against everything which he felt to be a bondage and all this on behalf of freedom of the spirit. He was indeed an apostle of spiritual freedom. We shall have to consider, therefore, however briefly, all these protests.

Kierkegaard contended that religion was entirely a personal matter which had nothing to do with the Church or the State. Kierkegaard's hatred of system is shared by most Existentialist thinkers. System, they say, is a kind of index or instrument which collects evidence or strings facts together: it cannot touch existence, which is intangible as well as inexhaustible. As Pascal was against the Cartesian system, Kierkegaard ranged himself against the Hegelian system, "the systematization of system," to which he opposed his doctrine of "Existence." Kierkegaard's outlook was, as it were, obsessed by the objectivism of Hegel, who held that

system is the ultimate result of all scientific knowledge about creations of the mind.

But, apart from philosophic or scientific system, Kierkegaard pointed out that there is another kind of systematization, *i.e.*, that deadening wall which is built up round man by daily routine. Kierkegaard designates this the "universe of the immediate neighborhood." Enveloped in this, man becomes ego-centric and loses his freedom. The syncope of freedom leads to anguish. Kierkegaard's favorite theme is the helplessness of natural man, torn and tormented by doubts and overwhelmed by feelings of aloneness and insignificance. This is the state of "sin." Although Kierkegaard and some of his followers use the theological term sin, it stands here for a very fundamental psychological trait rooted in the being himself: self-centeredness and the desire to make oneself exceptional. The completely self-centered individual, shut up within himself, is, in Kierkegaard's eyes, the truly demoniac. Kierkegaard's entire philosophy is a protest against the cult of such an individualism. For him the individual means man restored to faith and transfigured by communion with God: "Individual" spelt with a capital "I."

From the state of "sin," salvation comes only through faith. He placed faith in direct opposition to knowledge, his position being the extreme development of the stand taken by Pascal when he declared: "The heart has its own reasons of which reason is ignorant." For Kierkegaard, the intellect was the cause of all bondage. So he offered the sacrifice of his intellect to God. Many have questioned whether such a

sacrifice was called for. E. L. Allen has written about this:—

> Few men have offered to God such a sacrifice as he did, yet surely what he gave was that one sacrifice which God does not ask of his children, for it was the quenching of the Inner Light.

But to Kierkegaard, on the other hand, it meant the kindling of the inner light. In the human situation, according to Kierkegaard, there is inherent an ineluctable "*Either/Or,*" which he made the striking title of his best-known work. This facing of alternatives reminds one of another Dane, Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, who soliloquized: "To be, or not to be,—that is the question." But there was none of Hamlet's intellectual hesitancy about Kierkegaard. For him, the ethical plane alone is the domain of spiritual freedom and man has inevitably to make his choice: *either* the aesthtetical *or* the ethical—no compromise is possible. There is no way of escape from the dilemma. Yet this choice is no simple matter, as it appears at first sight, a choice made once and for all. He explains:—

> My either/or does not first of all designate the choice between good *or* evil; it designates the choice of choosing between good and evil *or* excluding such an alternative.

In other words, it is a choice of freedom or necessity, involving the totality of the being: it is the leap of the soul, the leap of faith, a leap not into the dark or despair but a leap into the lap of God. The justification of all faith is just this continual awareness of the presence of God. Faith is an act of will and choice. Knowledge of God is an inward experience. Once it has taken

place there can no longer be any problem of whether it is so or not. All else is merged in the affirmation: It is so. Kierkegaard says: "Faith is immediacy"—yet not immediacy alone: "Faith is immediacy after reflection."

The restoration of the state of faith is conversion. "My whole nature is changed," says Kierkegaard of his own conversion. "God has run me to a standstill." And he considers his conversion as an event "of incomparably greater importance than a European war or a war which involves all the corners of the earth, it is a catastrophic event which moves the universe to its deepest depths."

This conversion is the waking of the sleeper, a call to action, the first feeling of the "shock of existence" of life with all its responsibilities and in all its intensity. It involves simultaneously rejection and revelation. The existent is the hidden being (*sūkshma*), what is general is what is manifest (*sthūla*). The rejection of the latter brings about the revelation of the former, which is "inwardness," or subjectivity. Kierkegaard says, ". . . God is a subject, and therefore exists only for subjectivity in inwardness." The very idea of objective order is the source of the slavery of man, yet this has been the motive of European philosophy since it began. Kierkegaard seeks to shift the European speculative balance. In the words of Theodor Haecker, Kierkegaard strives to reverse the order and procedure for philosophy and thought: "He wishes to go from the person over the things to the person, and not from the things over the person to the things." Kierkegaard emphasizes that subjectiveness is really the most complete

objectiveness. Yet paradoxically he holds that in order to maintain our inwardness, we must abandon pure inwardness. True inwardness is "solitude" which is the secret state, the reserve land of our being. It is not merely objective solitude, although that is also needed; for in a crowd the tension involved in real existence cannot be realized. But true solitude is living continually in the sight of God, and the expectation of the joy of getting a response and recognition. Kierkegaard unhesitatingly holds that, as between God and mankind, the relationship of man to God is higher and greater than his relationship to his species. He always fought with stubbornness that idea which had dominated European thought ever since the Renaissance, *i.e.*, that man was the measure of all things and that nothing lay beyond him. He held that this substitution of man for God was the root cause of all our modern troubles.

Some implications of the notion of inwardness or "solitude" are interesting. It is of course the antithesis of Hegel's notion of outwardness and its "imperialistic developments." Kierkegaard offers in place of Hegel's "publicness" his own notion of modesty associated with the idea of appeal. It is of course closely connected with the dominant Kierkegaardian note of living in the sight of God. He thought that modesty was existence in so far as it could not be adequately expressed. In fact he goes to the length of defining man as a being capable of being ashamed: "I am ashamed, therefore I exist!" Modesty, he claims, is the hall-mark of spirituality. We can now picture to ourselves Kierkegaard's spiritual man. There is nothing exceptional or spectacular about

him, he can be that very family man whom nobody ever notices. He preserves in himself as many as possible of the generally accepted human qualities. He faces his tasks on the serious side of existence, avoiding the common tendency to play around with anything that offers the possibility of "diversion" in the Pascalian sense. From moment to moment he is performing the crucial act of deciding, exercising choice, the profound significance of which can only be expressed by means of a paradox: "The true concrete choice is that by which, at the very moment when I choose to renounce the world, I choose also to return to the world." There is repetition, not a mechanical repetition but an exuberant swelling of inwardness; the same thing and yet a variation of it, and yet the same thing. As observed by Emmanuel Mounier: Once man has grasped this fundamental truth, he abandons his passion for knowledge in favor of the sustaining passion for non-knowledge; he forsakes the philosophy of the daytime for the philosophy of the nighttime.

Thus Kierkegaard's spiritual man is perpetually detaching himself from himself, from his passions, from his actions and from the paralyzing effect of his own perfections. Thus he achieves the experience of the transcendence of human existence by the act of transcending himself. One cannot help feeling how close all this is to the ideal of the *Sthita prajna* in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

V

With Pascal and Kierkegaard, Existentialism was only another way of describing Christian experience.

We now come to a very different type of personality, at least at first sight: Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). He brings us down to the very commencement of our own century. Some may be inclined to question the propriety of his being included among the pioneers of Existentialism. Yet he has deep and profound affinities with the essence of the movement and in him we come to the stage of its growth when the main trunk divides into two branches. Nietzsche himself was a divided personality. In him there were two sides, often at war with each other. But he was aware of it himself. He declared: "I know both sides because I am both sides." His fundamental problem was the transcending of both in a quest for a higher humanity, for the Superman. In his most important work: *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* the prophet Zarathustra is a symbol of the ambivalence of Nietzsche's own nature and represents his striving to turn polarity into unity, in other words, to transcend his own ego. Such transcendence has been described by him in numerous passages. It is implied in the title of another of his well-known books: *Beyond Good and Evil.* As he put it, his aim was "to get on the other side of all problems."

Nietzsche's philosophy is difficult to understand unless approached with sympathy. Unquestionably, he is the most misunderstood of all European philosophers. This is partly due to the nature of his thought and partly due to the form in which he chose to express himself. He left no system and was himself a critic of the great German systematizers, Kant and Hegel. Only about half his works consist of what we usually call

coherent books. The other half comprises strings of aphorisms—over 4,200 in number—in the course of which there is scarcely any statement which is not contradicted by another one somewhere. He was primarily an artist; and, in his own words, "Every artist contains multitudes and contradicts himself." Like Emerson, whom he greatly admired, he held that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." For his own part he desires to prove nothing and is reckless of consistency. This has inevitably led to misunderstanding. Actually there are two schools of Nietzschean criticism, holding diametrically opposed views about the value of his thought. But curiously, it is not to his hostile critics but to his avowed disciples, the so-called Nietzscheans, that may be traced the notoriety associated with his name in the minds of many. Nietzsche, with an almost prophetic insight, seems to have anticipated this: one of his deepest misgivings was that his work would be misunderstood. In an extraordinary dream described in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, a child shows Zarathustra his face in a mirror, the mirror of public opinion; and, appalled at the misunderstanding revealed, he retires into privacy. Throughout Nietzsche's works are scattered scathing remarks on the subject of disciples and followers generally, which are revealing. Yet in his writings there is a higher consistency which has escaped those who have insisted on taking him too literally. He was more a poet than a philosopher; and, as Croce reminds us: "We must read Nietzsche's philosophy for its poetic rather than historic truth."

The German philosopher Vaihinger had a prejudice against Nietzsche to start with and avoided him. But later he discovered congenial veins of thought in him and pronounced him to be "a great liberator." That sane and balanced thinker, Havelock Ellis, said of Nietzsche: "From the first to the last, wherever you open his books, you light on sayings that cut to the core of the questions that every modern thinking man must face." Those who have understood Nietzsche will not rate the praise too high when Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy said that in him had to be recognized "the reawakening of the conscience of Europe."

This rather elaborate preface has been necessary in order to overcome the common initial prejudice against Nietzsche. We are here concerned not with Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, but with that part of it which has a bearing on the development of Existentialism. In fact, his attitude is so crucial to our subject that we shall have to examine it at some length. First, some misunderstandings have to be cleared. Nietzsche has been described by some critics as the apostle of a Nihilistic revolt against "rationality" and the historical outlook. Nietzsche did certainly protest against the contemporary tendency to make an idol of history. He said:—

> We would serve history only so far as it serves life, but to value its study beyond a certain point mutilates and degrades life: the unrestrained historical sense, pushed to its logical extreme, uproots the future. . . .

We may compare this attitude with the even more extreme position taken by Kierkegaard, who held that history was the antithesis of faith, in relation to which

he said there was only one tense, the present. He wrote:—

> Every day I grow older, I feel happier, and yet only truly blessed in the thought of eternity, for the temporal is not and never was the spirit's element, but rather in a certain sense its affliction.

And Nietzsche certainly objected to the equating of human progress with the extension of rationality. He foretold and recognized the void of Nihilism which pure intellectuality and Rationalism would create, involving necessarily a paralysis of the creative will. Thus, if Nihilism means a negation of all values, he was the very reverse of a Nihilist. He insisted with all his strength that man is an evaluating animal and can exist only by selecting moral values to which to cling and by which to live. This is a truth embodied in human experience from the beginning and radiantly expounded by Nietzsche in all his works. He formulated incomparably the inner urge towards wholeness and coherence, and so towards new symbols, and sought by his creative ardor to redeem accident into order.

Nietzsche's violent attacks on Christianity have created the impression that he was the apotheosis of irreligion. Nothing could be farther from the truth. From early childhood, he was abnormally religious. "At twelve years of age," he wrote later, "I saw God in all his glory." As clearly as Kierkegaard's, Nietzsche's was a religious mind, and not merely in his younger days. *Gottergebenheit* (surrender to God) was his own description of his mental attitude. He was an earnest seeker for a new faith and a new "Father." He was no

ordinary secularist. He hated lukewarmness and not faith. He objected above all to moral stagnation and anaesthesia: *Gemütlichkeit.*

Havelock Ellis says, "Nietzsche was himself of the stuff of which great religious teachers are made, of the race of apostles." Heinrich Mann says he can be set beside Jesus Christ himself without blasphemy, and that he introduced both Christian morals and belief in God into the most advanced thinking. He possessed the religious ecstasy of active moral energy. When he condemns St. Paul, whom he calls the inventor of Christianity, even his hatred thrills with a tone of intimate sympathy. An examination of his attitude towards Pascal is very revealing; he singles him out as the supreme example of "that gruesome way of perishing known as Christianity." Yet he cannot restrain his admiration, for he said that Pascal was "the first among Christians who was able to unite fervor, intellect and candor—think of what that means!" He calls St. Paul the "Jewish Pascal" and he has himself been described by Havelock Ellis as the Pascal of Paganism, possessing in himself the same tragic sincerity, the same restless self-torment, the same sense of the abyss, all characteristic Existential traits. Nietzsche's was an inverted form of Christianity. Like Meister Eckhart he cried: "I pray God that he may rid me of God!" It is a case of *nindā stuti,* an attitude well understood in the Hindu religion. To the very last, Nietzsche was obsessed with the idea of God. In late madness he would imagine that he was God. He did not like the word God with its Christian associations. So he substituted "Destiny" and "Superman,"

God-substitutes. Nietzsche would rely on Destiny and await the Superman, which, as Eric Bentley has pointed out, is only a paraphrase of the injunction to trust in God and await the Messiah.

Nietzsche's was indeed an exceptional character. He had prophetic dreams and apocalyptic experiences round which his thought gathered. He knew there was one central experienced reality: a great longing that could never be appeased, a longing for the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory. He fully understood what Existentialists mean by "transcendence." He wrote: "Man is created to be surpassed." Man can attain his fulness only by living above himself. That is the seed from which his idea of the Superman developed. Man, says Nietzsche's Zarathustra, should be touched by lightning and inoculated with frenzy: the Superman is lightning and frenzy. He himself was touched by it. His description of the state of inspiration can only be appreciated by those who have had a like experience:—

> An ecstasy whose frightful tension is occasionally released in a stream of tears. . . . One is completely beside oneself. One is distinctly conscious of countless delicate tremors and thrills down to the very toes . . . an instinct for rhythmic relations. . . . The whole process is in a large measure independent of the will, yet in that tempest one feels free and entirely unconditioned, mighty and godlike. . . .

Nietzsche felt intuition as a state of passion and he would have liked to make such intuition, the will to power, mistress of the world (*Ādiśakti* as *Jagadambā*), in the words of Heinrich Mann. He had a veneration

for this deep-lying source of all life and his aim was to reach it and thereby "recover the pristine purity and innocence of the stream of becoming."

We are now in a better position to appreciate the general trend of his thought. A philosopher, according to Nietzsche, must regard himself as a symbol and abbreviation of all the facts of the world: he is the real man. A philosopher is less concerned with "truth" than with the essentials of fine living. He is above all an artist. His instinctive comparison for a good thinker was always a good dancer. He says:—

> I do not know what the mind of a philosopher need desire more than to be a good dancer. For dancing is his ideal, his art also, indeed his only piety, his "divine worship." (*Nataraja*)

In general he thought of art as the great stimulus to life. Havelock Ellis has pointed out that Nietzsche had no system probably because the idea that dominated his thought was an image, and not a formula, the usual obsession of philosophers, such as may be clapped on the universe at any desired point. The noteworthy characteristic in his philosophy is its fundamentally psychological character, that a man's philosophy to be real must be the outcome of his own psychic constitution (*Samskāra*). He converted the whole of *himself* into his work, as in his view every philosopher is bound to do, "for just the art of transformation *is* philosophy." He had no faith in non-participant objectivity and inert analysis, which form the stock in trade of the routine philosopher.

Nietzsche's vision was of a free, direct and disconnected nature. As against what he considered the fixi-

ties of Platonic and Christian tradition, he held to a doctrine of the diversity and ever-changing nature of truth, as also of moral ideas. He said: "It is with thinkers as with snakes: those that cannot shed their skins die." This corresponds to a famous Upanishadic analogy. Every man must find his own virtue and his own categorical imperative. He revolted against conventional morality which he defined as "the mob-instinct working in the individual." To him spiritual progress meant gradual emancipation from such morality. For this reason he loved to describe himself as the immoralist. He passionately hoped for a transvaluation of all values, and was the first to point out what Freud confirmed later; *viz.*, that by an analysis of what is called conscience, there is no ground for holding that it is the voice of God in the human breast; quite otherwise, it is the voice of the herd and represents faith in authority. So every kind of originality inevitably involves a bad conscience. Nietzsche calls conventional morality, the slave-morality, and this must give way to the master-morality. This part of his doctrine has laid him open to violent attack and not without justice. He often put it too crudely. But by slave-morality he meant the morality of utility. He explains: "The ignoble nature is distinguished by the fact that it keeps its advantage steadily in view," and that in contrast with this the higher nature, *i.e.*, the nobler nature, appears more irrational. In the light of this, we can understand his reaction against the 18th- and 19th-century morals and particularly against the modern, largely English, utilitarianism. Nietzsche's doctrine is in this respect aristo-

cratic, in the sense that it is esoteric. It is not a cult of wickedness but the inculcation of unfashionable virtues.

Thus Spake Zarathustra becomes progressively more subjective: more relevant to the individual and discipline of self than to *Realpolitik,* or economics. The true master is he who has mastered himself. Not self-indulgence but self-denial is his motto. He said: "Culture should consist above all in obedience and habituation," and "The discipline of suffering alone creates man's pre-eminence." Like the modern Existentialist he wants man to learn to carry the burden instead of practicing evasion. He would revive the old Greek ideal of the tragic man as against the rational or economic man. In line with this, is his appreciation of solitude which he considered not only as a tragic state but an active virtue. His Zarathustra says: "The universal truths have always been evolved in the desert." There, man wrestles with himself, and like the Buddha and Jesus, wins the victory over himself. This image of strife and overcoming is also characteristically Existentialist. Nietzsche has said in many places that a man's real self consists of the things which he has truly digested and assimilated; he must always conquer his opinions; and it is only such conquests which he has the right to report to men as his own. This reminds one of Schelling who had made such overcoming the very essence of thought itself: "Real thought is that whereby something opposed to thought is overcome. Where one has only thought, and that abstract thought, for content, thought has nothing to overcome." Coleridge had developed the same idea: "To the idea of life, victory

or strife is necessary; as virtues consist not simply in the absence of vices but in the overcoming of them."

It is hoped that sufficient has been said to give some idea of the complexity of the web of Nietzsche's thought. What he has in common with the previous thinkers dealt with will have become obvious. The final appraisal of Nietzsche in the Existential perspective can only be attempted at a later stage. But here it is essential to point out some fundamental points of difference between Nietzsche and his predecessors. Theistic Existentialism is incurably dualistic in its outlook and places God in opposition to nature. It is always facing an absolute alternative: either/or. But Nietzsche's sympathies are monistic and pantheistic. For him there is no gap in experience. There is a continuity between the vital, the psychic and the spiritual planes, and Nietzsche found ecstatic satisfaction in communion with nature. But it is a strange fact that, while temperaments pantheistically inclined have not had much quarrel with theism, theists have exhibited an uncompromising hostility towards pantheism, and would go to the length of equating it with atheism. We find this explicit even in Coleridge. One of the important consequences is that the idea of sin, so crucial for Pascal and Kierkegaard, finds no place in Nietzsche. Nietzsche dismisses the feeling of sin lightly as not a fact but a mere interpretation of a fact, of a physiological discomfort. We have seen already that Nietzsche gives little importance to the notion of conscience. For him these antitheses in experience (*dvandvas*) were the warp and the woof of the rhythmic pattern of experience, with its

ebb and flow, exhaustion and renewal, systole and diastole. He spoke of spiritual evolution as a continuation of biological evolution. Such an idea is repugnant to many theistic Existentialists. Thus Gabriel Marcel believes that Nietzsche degraded Existentialism into a glorification of vitally necessary overflowing. For Nietzsche who contemplated a reversion to the pristine purity and innocence of becoming, there was certainly no original sin, no contamination at the source. The final state was comparable to that of a little child: an idea which Jesus as well as the Upanishads uphold, but which the uncompromising Existentialist, Kierkegaard, opposes.

Lastly, Nietzsche, for all his understanding of the tragic experience, refused to be involved in it in the Existential sense, feeling all the time like an actor in a play. He had imbibed from his one-time master, Schopenhauer, the Indian concept of the world as play (*Līlā*), as illusion (*Māyā*).

Chapter II:

MODERN EXISTENTIALISM

I

Our study of modern Existentialism may well begin with Karl Jaspers. But Jaspers himself was influenced by Wilhelm Dilthey, directly and indirectly. So a brief consideration of Dilthey's ideas would serve as a useful introduction, bringing out the points of agreement and contrast. Dilthey (1833-1911) was in Germany the pioneer of what have been called the humanistic disciplines. He went to history in order to apprehend the "great humanistic positivities." Philosophy signified to him an attempt to persuade the spirit of culture to declare itself. "Culture," he said, "is a union of teleological tendencies. Each of these, like language, jurisprudence, myths and religion, poetry and philosophy, has an inner lawfulness determining its structure and hence its development." The personal mind was but the bearer and interpreter of a great cultural tradition and what was needed was a cumulative, massive and brooding understanding which would allow Shakespeare, Goethe, Roman law, the Church Fathers, the schoolmen and the more modern secularists or unregenerate Humanists to reveal their secret. He speaks of his own reading of Luther's letters and writings, and the history of the Reformation, and experiencing vicariously "a religious process of such eruptive power, of such energy, in which the stake is life or death, that it

lies beyond the possibility of personal experience for any man of our day." He goes on to say that man can thus

> . . . live in imagination through many other existences. Before man limited by circumstances there open out strange beauties in the world, and tracts of life which he can never reach. To generalize—man, bound and determined by the reality of life, is set free not only by art—but also through the understanding of history.

Dilthey set speculative questions aside and "studied the process of sympathetic understanding, soberly and scientifically." By this means he thought it possible to relive another's experience through interest and sympathy. He called this "the objectification of inner experience" and attributed to it an important rôle in the process of understanding. He said, the childhood self receives nourishment from its earliest days from the world of objective mind and thus discovers itself. The human being is incapable of realizing himself simply by noting his inward states—he needs the reflection of them in others to discover their meaning to himself. Our knowledge of human history is bound up with our interpretation of such objectifications. Through the ages, men have been perfecting the art of interpreting by means of poetry, painting, myth, legend, sculpture, song and history, the spirit of their fellow men. "This art of interpretation has developed just as gradually, regularly, and slowly as, *e.g.*, the art of questioning nature by experiment."

This enlarged concept of understanding as being something greater than mere knowing is Dilthey's prin-

cipal contribution. He sets his *hermeneutic,* or theory of the understanding, against a mere epistemology or theory of knowledge. To him the act of knowing is performed by a limited part of the mind, but the act of understanding is the movement of the whole Self, of the whole powers of the Person. He says: "We understand more than we know," and again: "Understanding can never be transmuted into rational comprehension." With this part of his doctrine, Existentialists would whole-heartedly agree.

But Dilthey, notwithstanding the importance he attached to the person, gives history priority over the individual. He says: "Man as a fact prior to history and Society is a fiction of genetic explanation." The very structure of man's spiritual life was his participation in the great social totality. It was the way he gathered reality into himself and moved with its deeper trend. Dilthey was fond of using the terms "life" and "living experience." His *cogito* was: I live, therefore I am. Although sceptical in his outlook, his interpretation of "life" resembles the description given by Christian theologians of the movement of the human soul towards God and towards redemption. It is this fact and his influence on later thinkers, like Jaspers and Heidegger, an influence which actually increased after his death, which constitute his interest for us.

It is well known that the Existentialist attitude to history is entirely different. Kierkegaard opposed Existence to History. Most Existentialists would class history with other systematizations of knowledge and would certainly refuse it priority over man. They con-

tend that when man is viewed primarily as a social animal, social relations and institutions begin to dominate him: he belongs to them, not they to him, and he gets smothered by his own "objectifications." It is also their argument that, although, as claimed by Dilthey, we can live through the experience of others and increase our human range, yet we cannot live through anyone else's experience of death; and we are utterly unable to understand our own dying. This contemplation of the frightful aloneness of man, as particularized in the stark fact of death, is one of the distinguishing marks of Existentialism.

II

We can now take up Jaspers (b. 1883), one of the most eminent among contemporary European philosophers. His position in the Existentialist scheme is somewhat ambiguous, although his importance and influence are admitted. It is usual to class him along with Heidegger as the source of the Atheistic branch of Existentialism. Yet Jean-Paul Sartre disowns him and relegates him to the Christian branch; while Emmanuel Mounier says that, although he was closest to Kierkegaard and much of his thought is of Christian composition, he cannot even be called a Christian philosopher. His "existence philosophy" is intended to supplement and even to supplant Dilthey's "life philosophy." By existence, Jaspers intends something richer and more profound than what Dilthey meant by "life."

It was Kierkegaard who gave the word "Existenz"

its novel and profound sense; and Jaspers explains it as man's possibility of *being himself* by transcendence, his realization of his full potentialities, that by which the word "human" is decisively removed from the category of the biological (*Pasutva*). Etymologically, too, the word indicates that which stands out (*ex-sistet*) from the background. Opposed to it is *"Dasein,"* being, merged in a particular, determinate situation, circumscribed in time and space. Real existence is the transcending of this situation. It is something which never becomes an object and can only be pictured in terms of a gushing forth (*sphurattā*). It represents the "fundamental resurgence" (*Ursprung*) responsible for thinking and acting. It is "energetic being," a conquest, a perpetual state of flowing and reflowing, of reverse and triumph whose rhythm constitutes the feeling of "crisis."

Jaspers generalizes Kierkegaard's attack on Hegel's totalitarianism of system. Objective knowledge, according to Jaspers, is merely the classification of experience into more and more general categories, all these categories being finally included in Being, the most generalized and, at the same time, the most worthless category. This attitude is clarified in his work, *The Philosophy of Descartes*. His reaction is similar to that of Pascal nearly three centuries earlier: Descartes represents the totally abstract and non-Existentialist thinker; his "*Cogito, ergo sum*" defines an existence almost wholly devoid of content, his doubting was pale and bloodless. He never experienced the philosophical vertigo of radical doubt as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche

knew it. To him life was "a problem to be solved" rather than a "reality to be experienced." On this ground, Jaspers would distinguish the Existentialist standpoint from that of the phenomenological school. The latter is the attitude of a mere spectator or observer, whereas the former is of a participant in existential reality, continually presenting "disequilibrium and risk, open possibilities and urgent problems, and fecund insufficiencies for action."

At the root of existence are antinomies, contradictions which cannot be solved, oppositions that cannot be integrated: liberty coupled with dependence, communication bound to solitude. These form the very stuff of existence, and if the oppositions vanish, existence itself vanishes into nothing. The dominant feeling in this tension of antinomies is anguish (*Angst*), a feature that characterizes the outlook of every member of the group from Pascal to Sartre, the mood which reflects the void of non-existence, or, for Pascal and Kierkegaard, the desperation of isolation from God. Closely akin to this is the feeling of abandonment described by Jaspers and that of the existent as "surrounded, captivated and hemmed in on all sides by being which to him is opaque and hostile, and which threatens him because of its nearness and irruption." Yet this anguish is the essential pre-requisite to the discovery of being which is ultimately a mystery and can only be experienced as wonder (*āścarya*). The man without wonder is the non-existent man.

There is in time that which surpasses time, in the midst of necessity there is liberty as an impulse to over-

come the "given" of fact. This is what constitutes the mystery: the ingression of the eternal into the time process. That is the historicity of consciousness, or personality. But personality should not be construed as an isolated affair. It is in its nature that it shall enter into communication with others, albeit communication of a restricted kind. The changing relation of persons constitutes historicity, the intermingling of being (*Dasein*) and true existence. Existentialists, following Jaspers, designate this process as positive history and set it up against the claims of orthodox history as put forward by Hegel and later by Dilthey. They say that there can be no kind of history, not even natural history, unless it is associated with human existence. That is why Kierkegaard opposed Existence to History, conventional history, which is the domain of necessity. But Jaspers develops the idea of true or positive history as an account of the trend towards freedom in the individual.

His analysis of "being-in-a-situation" emphasizes the liaison between the highest spiritual life and the restrictions which the world imposes. Yet what is commonly called the objective world is not the world of actual experience. Jaspers claims: I am not in the world but in *my* world. The world that I conceive is always a party to my point of view; I discover it by finding my way about in it; I am not merely its observer. Yet this is not a purely subjective view either. For Jaspers existence runs a middle course between a form of subjectivity and a form of objectivity. Supported by objectivity in order to gain stability, it plumbs

the depths of being through subjectivity. He calls this *ipse*-ness, which represents oneness with the world and distinguishes it from pure subjectivity which means shutting oneself up in oneself, that complete ego-centricity whose mark is anguish. From this one is saved by the factor of communication which represents the will to know and the will to reveal oneself. There is thus a reversal of the habits of the mind, what Bergson would call *metanoia,* a turning inward. This inwardness is however coupled with a continual watchfulness against ego-centricity; it is an inward renunciation and not an inward grabbing: reminding one of Kierkegaard's idea that in order to maintain our inwardness we must abandon pure inwardness.

Jaspers, reacting against the vacuity of the modern world, has sought to confirm himself in a philosophic faith independent of revelation. But the antinomies of life remain with him. He will not yield to the lure of happiness. Man is a being torn asunder: the pursuit of freedom requires definitive antinomies and heart-rendings. He illustrates the final antinomy of existence by the two laws of day and night. They are bound to each other. The law of the day gives an arrangement to our life, demands clarity, coherence, fidelity, reason. It demands that something be realized in the world, constructed in time, that the *Dasein* shall be given a content. But the passion for night breaks every order and sinks us in the abyss of the null which draws everything into its vortex. Against the idea which belongs to the day, of positive construction within the historic process, night admonishes that everything must be

destroyed. To every living being comes death. Passion for the night has a loving and fearful relation with death as its friend and its enemy. Jaspers's works are haunted by the implications of death. Incompleteness is the measure of man and shipwreck is the ultimate end. Liberty means the acceptance of the possibility of shipwreck as the fulfilment and triumph of being.

It is not claimed that we have been able to follow all the complexities of Jaspers's thought which is still in the process of development. Some concluding observations may help fill up a few gaps. His attitude towards reason is far less uncompromising than that of Kierkegaard, his avowed master. Similarly, notwithstanding his fundamental criticism of all collective and institutional machinery, *e.g.*, Churches, States, Parties, etc., he concedes its necessity as an intermediary between the particular and the universal; and even goes to the length of seeing some initiating virtue in the working of such machinery and even in the pre-occupations it gives rise to. Again, to him, as we have already seen, objectivity is not an original sin as it appears to some Existentialist thinkers. He says:—

> It is through philosophy that objectivity is called in question. But the danger in such a form of reflection is that it dissolves all content . . . and is left stranded in Nihilism. The aim of philosophy is to get a fresh grip on objectivity so as to make it the means of causing existence to appear.

Commenting on the spirit of modern times, Jaspers feels that as a result of the perfection of technique which is taking place before our very eyes, there is a totalitarian trend to organize the world rationally. Man tends

to consider himself more and more an integral part of this world and is in danger of finding himself totally merged in that organization. Nevertheless such merger or reduction cannot be effected without man's doing violence to himself, and without hurting more and more his profound being which seeks liberty and faith. He goes on to say:—

> The only heroism which still remains accessible to the man of today is that of work without applause, of action without glory. The true hero is characterized to-day by loyalty to his profession and he does not allow himself to be shaken from his path either by resistance or criticism. . . . He resists only when overwhelming forces tend to impose themselves on him in spite of himself. . . . It is repugnant to the dignity of man, dignity which is beyond all justification, to think that liberty, faith and authenticity will one day disappear and be replaced by technical apparatus which will take its place. It is equally repugnant to think of death as the total negation of his existence. Man is more than what could be made of him in such perspectives.

These statements considerably modify the extreme position taken by him in some of his works. In practice, he is content, he says, with "the enthusiastic communion of a few friends out of which may arise a spiritual creation."

III

Jaspers had already introduced a certain degree of system into the implications of Kierkegaard's ideas. Martin Heidegger (b. 1889) has sought to complete the process. Like Jaspers, he too is a professor of philosophy. Kierkegaard, who hated system and disliked professors, would have watched this transformation with

dismay, for he thought that they "professed the fact which another has suffered." Jaspers has remained content with dealing with the experience of individual existents. But Heidegger set out with the object of elucidating the meaning of being-in-general, the very possibility of which Jaspers denies. So, Heidegger names his philosophy *super-* or *ultra-*Existential to distinguish it from the Existential philosophy of Kierkegaard and Jaspers. He declares that his concept of existence is wider than theirs because for him—and later Existentialists of the atheistical complexion follow him in this—"Existence precedes spirituality." He refuses to identify spirituality and existence as Kierkegaard and Jaspers do. But he continues to make use of quasi-religious terms in his exposition, although he is careful to divest them of all ethical content.

Heidegger was Husserl's successor in the German school of phenomenological analysis. But he applied the method with a difference. Unlike Husserl, who thought that existence could be observed and studied in a detached and impersonal manner, he held that it could be studied only from the inside through intimate participation. As against the Rationalist ideal of a neutral intelligence, he accepted the Existentialist concept of a militant intelligence, much wider in the range of its operation. He claims that we are affected by subtle realities (other than those of the unconscious) which never succeed in crossing the threshold of consciousness. These are actually perceived but in a mode differing from ordinary perception. They are revealed by fundamental sensations (*Stimmung*) whose sensitiveness

is superior to that of the intelligence which is to develop them later. It is in this way that we are aware of our position in the world. In this manner, our basic apprehension of existence, which directs our every move, is lived by us and yet not clearly understood. This dim consciousness, although inexplicit and without any specific locus of reference, according to Heidegger, already implies active interpretation.

He started with an analysis of the time-process in his celebrated book, *Being and Time,* since he felt, like Bergson, that duration was the essence of existence. But his approach was from another angle. Even a hostile critic like Ruggiero concedes that his analysis of time is a lasting contribution to philosophy. From this he proceeded to examine man's fundamental position in the world. His view is not subjective and may even be described as a reaction against subjectivism. Man is a being-on-earth, not placed there like a receptacle to be continually filled by outpourings from the world, yet, on the other hand, limited as he is by the confines of his body and his individuality, he is all that he perceives by the expansive power of his consciousness. But he has to accept his limitations for they are actually the very pillars of his freedom. There is a crude aspect of existence. Heidegger calls it the *Seinde,* the completely determined aspect in which man may be thought of as an object. But apart from this is a *project* which perpetually keeps its distance in respect of the crude existent. This is the prospective conception of existence. Man is not circumscribed by his immediate present, but he feels the call of the future with its tragic

urgency, for it is the call of death. Death is in this philosophy man's most personal potentiality. Man's freedom can only be attained in the face of death.

In the face of this, man is what he has decided to be: his existence is what he makes himself. His moods are not permanent possessions which he owns, but ways of living reality, each of which in turn occupies his whole attention and carries him forward to the great adventure of being himself. Like Jaspers, Heidegger conceives man as a power to be, an impulsion, a "bounding leap," a being-in-advance-of-himself. It is this movement they call transcendence. But their emphasis differs. For Jaspers the human being tends to extend beyond human existence; but for Heidegger there is nothing else but the world of man in which the existent is merely thrust outside of himself and in front of himself all on the same plane. The existent is always something more than what he is immediately, but not yet what he shall be.

The existent is imbedded right in the midst of the possibility of choosing between two ways of life, the authentic life and the unauthentic life. The latter is a tendency to be absorbed in the world of "dailiness," the world of *petit bourgeois* care and preoccupation and preoccupation and indifference. It is the world of the impersonal-theyself (*avidyā*)—which is the most common state of existence, the possibility of transcending which does not even strike many people. Man models himself on things until he comes to consider himself only a thing among things. Communal existence and gossip reduce each exister to the level of the distracted talk which is supposed to represent his personality.

There is a continual flight from "personal" responsibility leading to an uprooted existence. This is a kind of Original Sin whose momentum ever drags downwards. Man can free himself from it and pass on to authentic existence by realizing the dispersive power of the impersonal-theyself. This conversion is not the result of a call from God, but purely from the interior of the self.

The Existential anguish is for Heidegger the evidence of the authentic state. It is akin to the feeling of complete abandonment in what he calls the nothingness of manifestation, the "eternal silence of infinite space." "Every moment increases this sense of abandonment by handing me over defenceless to the hostile world." (*Bhava bhaya)* It is to be distinguished from fear, fear of particular objects. It is a realization of the absolute and fundamental finality of the human being in all his instability, lack of completion or totality. It is comparable to what Christian Existentialists call the apprehension of fundamental contingency. But for them it is in the nature of an exciting mystery. For Heidegger, as for Sartre, it is complete irrationality and plain absurdity incapable of any explanation. It is stark and staring fact. That is all. Heidegger would therefore banish all hope, he would lump all doctrines of salvation together as having been evolved in fear-shelters against anguish. He condemns Kierkegaard for envisaging at the end of the dark night the dawn of resurrection; this is nothing short of a betrayal and in his accusation Heidegger, whose slogan is "Risk all, lose all," would include Luther and St. Augustine.

In its extreme form, Heidegger's concept of being is

an inherent deprivation and impoverishment of being, and even the positive aspect of the potentialities of human existence, which he describes as a "bounding leap," reduces itself to a rebounding from nothingness to nothingness, which makes no meaning. But his attitude towards practical life is less uncompromising and his notion of authentic behavior merely steers clear of excessive preoccupations with finite goals, without any neglect of our daily work. He would have us accept the fact of our potentialities without becoming dupes to them—we should treat them as what they actually are, as nothing, as a modified form of annihilation measured in time, and as a postponement of death.

IV

Heidegger's dominant notion of being-for-death has been criticized forcibly by his avowed follower Jean-Paul Sartre (b. 1905). But the agreement between them on major points as well as in general outlook is noteworthy. It was usual to talk of the Sartre-Heidegger axis. The two men do not seem to have actually met. Later Heidegger is believed to have repudiated Sartre. The gulf between their respective circumstances was too wide to permit any personal liaison between Heidegger, who had turned Nazi, and Sartre, who was a prominent leader of the Resistance movement in France. Sartre started life as a schoolmaster. He did military service during the war, was taken prisoner and afterwards released on medical grounds. Since then he has been a full-time literary man and has attained distinction as a novelist and a playwright as well as a philosopher. His

major philosophic work *L'Etre et le Néant* (Being and Nothingness), a giant work of 722 closely printed and closely reasoned pages, has been hailed as a masterpiece by some and condemned equally strongly by others. In any case it is a remarkable achievement for a novelist. But he has expounded his philosophy in his novels also, and an initial experience of existence, what may be designated the metaphysics of being as viscosity, has been described with great vehemence and precision in his famous novel, *La Nausée* (Nausea). He deals with the fundamental contingency of existence as something absurd, sticky and repellent, with a complete absence of contour, like the experience of mucous secretions in the process of formation, filthy, obscene and nude. Thought itself is alleged to be of this nature. In opposition to this humid, proliferating excrescence, Sartre pictures freedom as a frozen and liberating emptiness. It must have been stuff like this which roused the ire of thinkers like Benedetto Croce, the great Italian idealist philosopher, and made him denounce Existentialism as a thing which "encumbers the world of spirit," a thing

> over-stimulated, poisonous, perverse, a kind of swelling in the groin . . . which many degenerate spirits admire as a sign of delicacy and nobility and religiosity, and which others, more or less inexpert, profess to cure by various improper and ill-directed means.

Actually, Sartre claims that Existentialism is the most austere of doctrines and is intended only for specialists and philosophers. Without going into the question of logical validity, his own philosophy moves

in and through a world of concrete circumstance and his writing has, in the words of Bernard Frechtman, "the alert quality of the perception of individual life in motion and is, to use one of Sartre's key-phrases, 'involved in action.'" Unlike the two German professors, Jaspers and Heidegger, he is not merely a man of the library but a man of the streets as well, and he writes as such. Gabriel Marcel says that Sartre's world is the world as seen from the terrace of a café. It is characterized by a kind of bohemianism which reacts against family life, against middle-class virtue and against the social order itself. This characteristic early manifested itself, *e.g.*, in his refusal to wear a coat and collar when, as a young man, he was a schoolmaster in Paris, which refusal got him into trouble with the school authorities.

Sartre has explained his leading ideas and defended them against criticism in a little book, *Existentialism*, and it would be best to follow them as far as possible in his own words. He quotes with approval Dostoievsky's saying: "If God did not exist, everything would be possible," and goes on to declare that that is the charter of Existentialism. His is an explicit and aggressive Atheism. In his Existentialist scheme freedom is not connected with grace as in the Christian branch. Marcel asserts: "I do not believe that in the whole history of human thought, grace, even in its most secularized forms, has been denied with such audacity or such impudence." According to Sartre: "Man is condemned to be free." As Frechtman says, Sartre's philosophy tries to make man aware of such freedom. And since free-

dom is an ambiguous state, both sought and feared, this philosophy is both frightening and liberating.

The common starting point for all schools of Existentialism is the formula: "Existence precedes essence." Hence they may all be described as subjective modes of approach. Sartre says: "First of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene and only afterwards defines himself." Or, rather, tries to define himself and finds it impossible. This, according to Sartre, is because he is at first, nothing. Only afterwards he will be something and he himself will have made what he will be, a view which Ponge expressed in his dictum: "Man is the future of man." This conception has been referred to by us as the prospective view of man's being, while considering Heidegger's thought. Sartre goes on to say: "This is what is called subjectivity."

This matter of subjectivity needs further elucidation. Sartre says: "Subjectivity of the individual is indeed our point of departure, and this for strictly philosophical reasons." Unlike Pascal and Jaspers, he has some measure of agreement with the Cartesian position, and goes so far as to admit: "There can be no other truth to take off from, than this: 'I think, therefore I exist.'" And he says that this is the only theory which gives man dignity, the only one which does not reduce him to an object, and which enables him to establish the human realm as an ensemble of values distinct from the material realm. This statement is of great interest because in another place he has said: "Matter is the only reality I am able to grasp." This apparent inconsistency is due to the fact that Sartre combines in himself a certain

kind of idealism with a materialism which derives from 18th century traditional French thought.

But Sartre extends the Cartesian conception of subjectivity. This is perhaps his most noteworthy contribution to philosophic thought. He says:—

> But the subjectivity that we have thus arrived at, and which we claim to be the truth, is not a strictly individual subjectivity, for we have demonstrated that one discovers in the *cogito* not only himself but others as well. . . . The philosophy of Descartes and Kant to the contrary, through this I think we reach our own self in the presence of others, and the others are just as real to us as our own self . . . as the condition of one's own existence. . . . In order to get at any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person. The other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge about myself. This being so, in discovering my inner being, I discover the other person at the same time, like a freedom placed in front of me, which thinks and wills only for or against me. Hence let us at once announce the discovery of a world which we shall call inter-subjectivity. This is the world in which man decides what he is and what others are.

There is perhaps nothing more remarkable in the whole of Sartre's work than his phenomenological study of the "other"; and for Sartre, this awareness of others is inseparable from the shock of the encounter with what he describes as a "freedom," an alien freedom which is adverse and threatening to himself.

For Sartre there are no values external to man, whether imposed by God, or by obligation to any conception of "human nature." But his philosophy is entirely in a human setting. He speaks of human conditions, meaning thereby those *a priori* limits which outline man's situation in the universe. The limits are

neither subjective nor objective, or rather, they have objective and subjective sides: objective, because they are to be found elsewhere and are recognizable everywhere; subjective, because they are lived and are nothing if man does not live them, that is, freely determine his existence with reference to them. The configurations may differ but they are understandable and this fact confers on them, however individual they may be, their universal significance. The theme of Sartre's philosophy is man's personal responsibility for what he is and does, and his problem is to face squarely the implications of personal action in a universe without purpose. He says: "We are dealing here with an ethics of action and involvement," and claims that no doctrine is more optimistic, since man's destiny is within himself. He chooses his values and makes himself and for this choice he is responsible.

Sartre says: "There is no reality except in action." So his doctrine is far removed from quietism. He goes on: "Man is nothing more than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself." The Existential awareness illuminates the needless burden that man carries and tries to force him to recognize that he is actively carrying it, rather than passively impelled by it. The Existentialist does not believe in the power of passion. He will never agree that a sweeping passion is a ravaging torment which fatally leads a man to certain acts and is therefore an excuse. He thinks that man is responsible for his passion. Thus Existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him,

responsibility not merely for himself individually but for all men, in the inter-subjective world pictured by Sartre.

The familiar Existential terms, quasi-religious in their origin: anguish, despair and forlornness are all used by Sartre. He says: "Man is anguish" which is his name for the feeling of total and deep responsibility, for in making a decision man cannot help having a certain anguish. It is a feeling which all leaders have experienced. It is not a curtain separating him from action itself. Sartre says: "Of course, there are many people who are not anxious; but we claim that they are hiding their anxiety, that they are fleeing from it." Forlornness and anguish go together, and it only means that man is alone in choosing his being and cannot rely on any external help. Similarly despair; he confines himself to reckoning with what depends on his own will or on the ensemble of probabilities which make action possible.

Apart from these familiar ideas, Sartre has many novel turns of thought. He develops Heidegger's notion of "being-for-itself"; he dwells on a peculiar character of consciousness which leads to his concept of being as impersonation, and leading naturally to a confusion between sincerity and bad faith. According to Sartre, sincerity is not a virtue in itself. Again, for him there is a complete failure of communication between existents. He thus denies the very possibility of communion, or of "we" as subject. As regards love and friendship his view is agnostic or even Nihilistic. As a result we are left with a bleak philosophy in which action is without

significance or content and freedom is equated with non-being. Sartre's dialectic makes an exaggerated use of the concept of negation and leads inevitably to a purely negative type of enlightenment.

V

Gabriel Marcel represents the other pole of French Existentialism as contrasted with Sartre, whose senior contemporary he is, and like whom he is a playwright and an author besides being a philosopher. He is the exponent of present-day French Christian Existentialism coupled with certain earlier attempts to evolve a personalist philosophy. He has much in common with thinkers like Berdyaev for whom the subject of philosophy is the human person. In an autobiographical sketch, Marcel has given an account of the growth of his ideas. He seems to have early revolted against the values fostered by the prevailing system of education. He calls it the "desert universe." He started with a horror of the spirit of abstraction and mistrusted Hegel, and even more, Spinoza. But he was greatly attracted by Schelling. His desire was for the concrete, yet not the kind of concrete experience as understood by the empiricists; and also not the world of the "altogether natural" which they describe. He calls that a pseudo-idea and like Jaspers devotes considerable effort to debunking it. He thinks the error of empiricism consists in its ignoring the part played by creative initiative in any genuine experience. So he pleads for a higher empiricism. He speaks of unexplored and uncharted zones

of experience, but these are not connected with what may be called metapsychical phenomena, which he does not deny. But in his own words:—

> All my effort can be described as a straining towards the production—I dislike using this physical term—of currents by which life is restored to certain areas of the mind which seemed to have sunk into torpor and begun to decay.

Marcel has said that his continual and central metaphysical preoccupation was to discover how a subject, in his actual capacity as subject, is related to a reality which cannot in this context be regarded as objective, yet which is persistently required and recognized as real. Such inquiries could not be carried out without going beyond the kind of psychology which limits itself to defining attitudes without taking their bearing and concrete intention into account. He says this accounts for the convergence of the metaphysical and the religious, apparent in his earliest writings. He saw a hidden polarity between the seen and the unseen. His aim was to discover the intimate at the heart of the remote: to discover an elsewhere which should be essentially a here: to extend as much as possible the region where one is at home: the metaphysics of the at home. The philosophical plane concerns knowledge in its capacity to transcend objectivity. The existent is a being continually in collision with the impersonality of "thing." He was greatly influenced by Bergson and shares his deep-rooted distrust of the scope of the intellect. He goes to the length of saying that, "to think, to formulate and to judge is always to betray." There is a radical weakness in the faculty of judgement; it is therefore

necessary to assume the existence of a domain beyond speech (*yato vāco nivartante* . . .) in which harmony can be discerned and in a sense even restored. The philosopher is really a seer and not a dialectician. He considers the normal in the strange light shed by a sufficiently advanced meditation (*abhidhyāna*) for it to appear supra-normal.

Marcel's philosophic method is one of recollection, which is an inward renunciation, a relaxing in the presence of a reality recognized as being there already and awaiting the seeker (*svatahsiddha*). It is perpetually making a new beginning, continually resuming existence right up to the end of life. Thinking is not discarded, but it is an approach rather than a systematization; a laying of foundations rather than the construction of an edifice; a clearing of the ground, which is always being restarted without any progress being made, rather than a definite pathway. "It is not so much a question of building up as of digging down." It is a perpetual beginning again. He emphasizes that reality cannot be summed up, and objects to the "illicit use of the idea of integration" made by systematic philosophers. He does not accept as ultimate Plato's distinction between the apparent and the real, but for him progress of thought sets out its positions successively. He actually rejoices in the fact that he cannot write his philosophy in coherent language.

According to Marcel, the more we accept reality, the more it ceases to be comparable with an object placed in front of us from which we can take our bearings. Basically, reality is indefinable. Being is an "in-

exhaustible concretion," which can only be recognized or rather "greeted." Possession cannot describe the relationship between the seeker and "knowledge of being." The sage does not possess knowledge of being, he is identical with it. This fundamental distinction is expounded by him in a book characteristically named: *Être et Avoir* (To Be and To Have) or as it may be paraphrased: Participation *versus* Possession. The curse of routine being is the desire for possession. "Despair and anxiety are diseases caused by possessiveness" (*abhiniveśa*). Possessiveness is called by him "undetachability."

Against this, Marcel sets the concept of "detachability" which dominates his thought. Detachability is a loosening of the "I"—a rejection of the desire to dispose of the ego and to calculate its potentialities. It is a voluntary ontological distraction. It represents patience, *i.e.*, renunciation of eagerness and indiscretion in the face of anything in the world which can arise independently of one's own action. The spiritual life is an ensemble of the actions by which we try to reduce within ourselves the part played by undetachability. Detachability stands for the predominance of the will to be free over the anxiety concerning organization, which, on the philosophical plane, is a preoccupation with the idea of an intelligible whole. Marcel denies it in the name of action which, to him, is something other than a mere content of thought. For Marcel, undetachableness is the "original sin" but it is a wickedness created by oneself and can be remedied by oneself through belief which represents the attitude of a subject

who is individual and concrete, but who refuses to identify himself with the empirical "I."

The attitude of detachableness means that one no longer thinks of oneself as a being to be protected. One is open to the world and to "another person." One submits oneself to others' influence without either systematic calculation or systematic mistrust. Marcel considers that so far as the knowledge and the mastery of the self are concerned, the safest route is via the detour provided by "another person." The realization of the presence of "another person" is the basic fact of Existential experience. The "thee" represents what we discover within ourselves and with its assistance we rise to higher stages. The encounter with it creates a universe of experience which previously had no reality. This experience of presence (*sānnidhya)* is termed "attestation" (*āptavākya*?) by Marcel, communion with a reality to which one bears witness. This "other person" is an aspect of freedom and not an aspect of nature. Marcel's idea of detachability is opposed to Sartre's conception of freedom: all for nothing, open to nothing and offered to nothing. For Marcel, the inward "other person" alone exists: *intimus intimo meo,* and is the ego and can be experienced by a higher self which keeps its distance from the ego.

It would not be possible here to enter into all the interesting implications of Marcel's thought. But at least passing reference has to be made to his fundamental distinction between problem and mystery. A problem is what one is confronted with, something which can be dealt with from the outside by analysis.

But mystery is a problem which "encroaches on its own data." Being is what ultimately withstands analysis (*anumāna*) and verification (*pramāna*) and is a mystery which can only be appreciated through the faculty of wonder. He deplores the decay of the faculty of wonder in the modern world, which has led to actual loss of the sense of the ontological. He describes the modern world as a functionalized world in which man is at the mercy of technics. But technics are incompatible with the fundamental nature of being. The soul of technics is the activity of verification which ends by ignoring presence—that inward realization of presence through love which infinitely transcends all possible verification because it exists in an immediacy beyond all conceivable mediation. Presence is sensed through recollection, which is identical with detachment and which reconciles being and action. It is a grasp on oneself which is also a relaxation and abandon. As Marcel puts it: "I encounter myself within recollection beyond all possible judgement, and I would add, beyond all representation." It is a way of liberation and detachment from experience, from "the content of thought" which is ultimately derived from experience. The control of technics can only be achieved on the plane of the active life by what he calls "thought at one remove," and this cannot find its center or its support anywhere except in recollection: "Thought which bears upon that thought itself and is related to a bottled-up yet efficacious underlying intuition (*pratibhā*) of which it suffers the attraction." The humble withdrawal which befits recollection is the antithesis of the pride, the *hubris*,

associated with technics. This attitude is called creative fidelity (*sāttvika śraddhā*) by Marcel. It refers invariably to a presence which can be maintained within us and before us. Fidelity is the active perpetuation of presence, the renewal of its benefits—of its virtue, which consists in a mysterious incitement to create. In its most rudimentary form it is the aspiration to participate in being, an aspiration which is itself already a degree of participation.

VI

It is now time to gather up the scattered threads of our topic. The Existentialist movement represents a reaction in the trend of European thought. Contemporary history has certainly had a share in producing it. Thus it is impossible not to note in Jaspers and Heidegger the deadlines of the psychic atmosphere which led to the building up and breaking down of Nazi Germany, or in Sartre the disillusionment and despair of France during the period of the Occupation. But in its more profound aspects Existentialism shows a turning of the tide which was long overdue. It is essentially a protest of human nature against the idea of objective order which dominated Western philosophy especially since the time of the Renaissance. It is a turning inward (*antarmukhī bhāva*). We saw its beginning in Pascal who declared that man should not worry himself about the Copernican theory, but concern himself with the prospects of his own soul. That preoccupation with salvation was not a new idea. That was the principal motive during the European Dark Ages. Pascal's protest against

the Cartesian view-point sums up the position. It was to be emphatically repeated two centuries later by Kierkegaard with his formidable dialectic. In the words of Theodor Haecker, already quoted, he strives to reverse the order and procedure for philosophy and thought and thus to shift the European speculative balance. Kierkegaard thought that the substitution of Man for God was the root cause of the troubles of modern man. As pointed out by Leslie Paul, the real crisis of today is to be found in the failure of the secular humanistic idea ushered in by the Renaissance and it is Goethe and Rousseau and Hegel who are on trial. We may add that the Existentialists seem to be the principal witnesses relied on by the prosecution.

It might be objected that this may account for Christian Existentialism but not for the Atheistic branch. But we saw illustrated in Nietzsche the curious phenomenon of the ambivalence of the religious instinct, how the religious temper could turn back on itself, and that Nietzsche's Atheism was only an inverted form of Christianity. This is even more true of Existential Atheism. Sartre's Existential man is a haunted, anguished creature, a wraith surrounded by the void, forsaken by God and not only robbed of God but of the world too. To quote Leslie Paul once again, Atheism today

> speaks of the dread and despair of man in a world in which God is dead. In this sense, Existential Atheism sounds often a more truly religious note than conventional Christian phrases of consolation, for it asks over and over again, as if it really meant to extract the answer—What is man? What is the meaning of human existence? What is to be done?

In the words of Ruggiero, one of the most formidable critics of Existentialism:—

> It is as if Sartre and others of his way of thinking, had wished to extract from religion its most useful attributes and resecularize them, making a corner in thought, as it were, receiving by reversion the title deeds of the religious congregations. Literature, and philosophy now realize the final consequences of the "death of God" prophesied by Nietzsche.

We cannot do better than repeat here Ruggiero's summing up of the Existential contribution to the pool of European thought: To Existentialism we owe the concept of existence as an emergence, as a coming of being out of being, hence a transcendence of the original datum, in such a way as to include "self" and "others," time and eternity, finite and infinite. He distinguishes between the Existentialist theme as handled by Kierkegaard, for example, and its later phenomenological orchestration as provided by Heidegger and Sartre, and believes that the orchestration was definitely to the detriment of theme and that ideas like that of guilt, which were appropriate in the religious context of Kierkegaard's theme, were wholly out of place in the lay vision of his successors and appear as a relic dragged from the stream. This is how he makes up the balance sheet: It has been the noteworthy task of Existentialism to vindicate the individuality of the person against its submersion in the Absolute of philosophic idealism: to consider the genesis of personality as a process of systole and diastole, to refer from "self" to the "other" so that individualization is at the same time a universalization and that the end of the

process is not a narrow personality isolated from the world but one which welcomes in itself all the life of the world and at the same time diffuses over it its individual force.

As against this, the charge may be levelled that in Existentialism the person is preoccupied only with living and the anguish of death, sometimes with the hope of a beyond. Having arrived in this world to come to no conclusion, it seems anxious about nothing beyond its own miserable egoism, its wretchedness and possible salvation. To what extent these remarks are justifiable is for each one to judge for himself.

Before closing, we may add some observations of our own. The basic problem in modern philosophy is the struggle between conceptual necessity and Existential freedom. The intellect with its analytical bent can only tackle the world of matter, as Bergson puts it. It was evolved in order to deal with matter. Analysis even when coupled with patient observation, as it is in the phenomenological school, cannot go beyond its own assumptions. This has been the case even in the region of the physical sciences. As Eddington admits, "We have found that where science has progressed farthest, the mind has but regained from nature that which mind has put into nature." This is in substance what Kant had declared over a century and a half earlier. This is in effect what Heidegger means when he confesses: "The philosopher never sets out to discover his philosophy but to verify it." His analysis of existence brings out the despair bound up with necessity, which

is the antithesis of freedom. For, the intellect can only appreciate those conclusions which are necessary.

Approaching the matter from a wholly different angle, the great analyst, Bertrand Russell, arrives at a conclusion not very different from that of Heidegger or Sartre:—

> That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no immensity of thought and feeling, can preserve the individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet nearly so certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. . . . Only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built!

Yet, in the region of the will, every man has an immediate experience of freedom. The instant he pauses to think over it, determinism creeps in insidiously and inevitably. As Coleridge said :"All true reality has both its ground and its evidence in the will, without which it complements science and itself is but an elaborate game of shadows."

Ultimately, our "resonance" to the experience of existence depends on our own will, on our tacit assumptions. One such is the "dread" arising from the consciousness of Nothing and the feeling of shipwreck that Heidegger, for example, has placed at the center

of his teaching: the approach to transcendence following on the heels of shipwreck. Another type of resonance, like that of Marcel, relies on the inward intensification through some profound experience that transcends the ordinary sphere of the self and leads to an ontology of hope; yet a hope which is the twin brother of despair, anguish, and is inseparable from it. That is inevitable for any form of dualistic religious experience which stops at the "other." As the Upanishad says, the "other" is always the cause of fear; to comprehend the "other" in the self is the ultimate wisdom and the highest joy. It is freedom from fear: such as Janaka had attained: *abhayam prāptosi vai Janaka*. That is, *ānanda,* which mind and words cannot reach but which is the only freedom from fear: *yato vāco nivartante, aprāpya manasā saha, ānandam brahmano vidvān na bibheti kutaścana*. That is the true Existentialism which is expressed in the *mahāvākya*: TAT TVAM ASI: the other is yourself. That is a realization reached through a long course of *sādhanā,* carried out perhaps through a series of births, not through dialectic and not through the erratic insights deriving from the Existential *tapas* of anguish.

Chapter III:

EXISTENTIALISM AND INDIAN THOUGHT

I

If the endeavor to present the leading ideas of Existentialism in a connected and coherent manner was difficult, the task of bringing out its affinities with Indian thought is doubly so, because the two are on altogether different planes. Besides, there is the problem of terminology. We felt we could not be sure if the Dane and the Frenchman and the German meant the same thing when they discussed Existentialism, each in his own terms or, shall we say, on his own terms. The confusion is worse confounded when we try to elicit the correspondence between the Sanskrit and European terminologies. On the one hand, there is the danger that we may mistake a superficial resemblance for a deeper identity; while, on the other, we might miss a profound similarity owing to the difference in the mode of expression. Yet the attempt appears to be worth while. We shall therefore proceed cautiously to deal with the more obvious analogies. It will, of course, not be possible to do justice to our topic. In what follows, allowance will also have to be made for some inevitable repetition of what has already been said.

Among the remote forbears of Existentialism we counted Socrates, who repeated the Delphic maxim: "Know thyself." This formula is indeed the key-note of all Indian philosophy, not excluding the Buddhist and

Jaina *Darśanas*. Indian thought is preoccupied with the investigation into the self and would refuse the name of philosophy to any other inquiry. Yet, while there is a convergence as regards direction, there is a world of difference as regards the objective, if really that term could, with propriety, be used in this context. For, the term Self in Indian thought is almost always used in contradistinction to the "ego," or the empirical self. The whole problem here is to distinguish effectively between the two. The Indian quest culminates in the celebrated Upanishadic denial: *neti, neti,* refusing to identify the true self with any of the experiences with which it is usually associated. These latter are called *upādhis*. It is not only the external world that is denied, but the vital and psychical factors in experience as well. This is fundamental, for it not merely characterizes the Vedanta, but at the other end it is the mark of the Sankhya, whose aim is to discriminate between *Purusha* (subject) and *Prakriti* (object). It is essential to remember in this connection that man's entire experience is identified with the latter at all stages, physical as well as mental. The claim of the Vedanta is that this distinction is only initial and that, at a higher level, there is utter identity or rather absence of dualism: *Advaita*. We shall not enter into these ultimates. It suffices for our purpose to note that neither the *Ātman* nor the *Purusha* can be equated with their *upādhis*. Empirical experience consists wholly in such identification: *abhimāna*. That is the "Original Sin" on the Indian philosophical horizon.

But we must return to a further consideration of the

question of direction. This urge towards "inwardness" which was fully manifest in St. Augustine and which marks all Existential thought from Pascal down to Sartre is best examined in Kierkegaard. It was he who envisaged most clearly that the very idea of order in the objective world, which had dominated European philosophy from at least the time of the Renaissance, was the source of the slavery of man. In the words of Theodor Haecker, Kierkegaard strove to reverse the order and procedure for philosophy and thought and thus to shift, if possible, the European speculative balance. In India, however this turning inward has been the mainspring of all philosophy down the ages. This *āntarmukhī-bhāva,* we must remember, was altogether different from speculation or even introspective analysis. Thus we find in the Katha Upanishad (iv. I):—

> The Self-existent (*Svayambhu*) pierced the openings (of the senses) outward; therefore one looks outward, not within himself; and it is only some rare seeker after immortality who turns his eyes inward and cognizes the self (*Atman*).

But the concern was not so much with what was seen inside; for, as the *Kena Upanishad* distinguishes it (i. 5):—

> That which the mind does not understand, but by which the mind is comprehended, that indeed is to be known as *Brahman* and not this which people contemplate as such.

The *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* (II. 4.14) luminously expounding the position, asks the paradoxical question, "By what, indeed, is the knower to be known?" (*Vijnātāram are kena vijāniyāt*?)

This process of turning inward was called *dhyāna* or meditation, and again *yoga,* terms which were later to acquire a precise and technical significance. We find them combined in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, which opens with the contemplation of the fundamental human contingency, terrified by which Pascal exclaimed:—

> I am terrified and marvel to find myself here rather than there, for there is no reason at all why "here" rather than "there," or why "now" rather than "then." Who put me there? By whose command and under whose direction were this time and this place destined for me?

The seekers in the *Upanishad,* enquiring into the nature of the prime cause, ask:—

> Whence are we born? Whereby do we live? On what are we established? Under whose orders do we suffer pains and pleasures, for obviously, the "ego" is not a free agent, being under the sway of happiness and misery?

The Upanishad then goes on to proclaim that those who pursued the path of meditation (*dhyāna-yoga*) beheld the self-power (*Ātma-śakti*) which was none other than the cosmic power (*deva*), the one cause of all causes, which is, however, not realized as such, hidden as it is by its own qualities (*gunas).*

Excepting Gabriel Marcel, we do not find the idea of synthetic meditation in any of the later Existential thinkers who are all preoccupied with the method of phenomenological analysis. Marcel alone claims:—

> All my effort can be described as a straining towards the production—I dislike using this physical term—of currents by which life is restored to certain areas of the mind which seemed to have sunk into torpor and begun to decay.

He is convinced that inquiries into the nature of the self cannot be carried out without going beyond the ordinary type of psychological analysis and he would therefore "consider the normal in the strange light shed by a sufficiently advanced meditation," to use his own language.

Yet, the element of meditation cannot be absent from any really profound thought-process. Thus, for example, in Pascal, we cannot help being struck by the single-mindedness of his yearning after God—*ekāgratā* and *Īśvarārpana Buddhi*—and his emphatic rejection of that scattering of the mind which he designates "diversion" and which is comparable to the *avyavasāyī buddhi* of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Kierkegaard, too, in his forceful way, stresses the opposition between the spiritual self and the limitations sought to be imposed on it, whether externally in the name of institutions like the Church and the State, or internally through the sway of philosophical systems or the deadly routine of "dailiness." He draws out the implications of the distinction between the "authentic" and "unauthentic" attitudes of the existent which had already been mentioned by Pascal, and which was to be developed by the later Existentialists.

II

By a thoroughgoing employment of the method of psychological analysis, these latter have arrived at their basic concept of "transcendence," involving an altogether novel enlargement of the consciousness of the

self by a negation of the more obvious limitations (*upādhis*) of the routine ego immersed in the world of deadening dailiness and custom. Kierkegaard had designated this "the universe of the immediate neighborhood," enveloped in which man becomes ego-centric and loses his sense of freedom. This syncope of freedom is experienced as "Angst," anguish, which is the bedrock on which the Existential edifice is reared, and which is the condition precedent to the possibility of transcendence. Karl Jaspers explains "transcendence" as "man's possibility of *being himself* by transcension," his realization of his full potentialities, whereby the "human" is decisively removed from the category of the biological—*paśutva*. Etymologically, too, the word "existence" signifies: that which stands out—*ex-sistet*—from the background. Here, the background is not merely the biological, for, opposed to "authentic" existence is "unauthentic" existence, "*Dasein*" the identification with a particular determinate situation, circumscribed in time and space. Real existence is the transcending of this situation.

Apart from this *Dasein*, Heidegger distinguished a crude type of existence, "*Seiende*," a thing reduced to an "it is," a thing without powers of choice—*jada*. For him, too, the experience of the self spreads beyond the limits of the routine ego. First, he seeks to extend the scope of perception and intelligence as included within the ambit of the Sanskrit term *antahkarana*. He finds that we are affected by subtle (*sūkshma*?) realities which never succeed in crossing the threshold of consciousness. These are revealed by fundamental sensa-

tions (*Stimmung*) whose sensitiveness is superior to that of ordinary perception. Of course, there is nothing occult about them, but it is on these that our basic apprehension of existence is founded, an apprehension which directs our every move, yet is not clearly understood. According to Heidegger, this dim consciousness, although inexplicit and without any specific locus of reference, already implies active interpretation.

These perceptions are developed later by the intelligence (*buddhi*) which plays in his scheme a dynamic and even militant rôle. He emphatically denies the phenomenological claim of the possibility of observing existence impersonally from the outside, and asserts that the intelligence, by its mere entry, alters the very contour of the entire field of observation. This has all along been one of the commonplaces of Indian thought, which, it is of interest to note, is now receiving confirmation from the physical sciences also. Hence the dawning realization that the so-called "objective" world is not a set-up of the relations between things themselves, so much as a world conditioned by our own preoccupations.

On these lines, Heidegger proceeds to extend the scope of the experience of the self in space as well as time. Man is not placed on earth like a receptacle to be continually filled by outpourings from the external world. Limited as he is by the confines of his body and his individuality, yet he is all that he perceives by the expansive power of his consciousness. As Emmanuel Mounier puts it while expounding Heidegger's standpoint, "I am those very mountains that I can see, or the

whole of that country whose life I share, or those far-off friends by whose efforts I do live." This brings to our mind the pregnant statement of the *Śiva Sūtra*: *Dṛśyam Śarīram*: All that the self perceives is really its body. Man is not merely extended in space but also in time. This latter is Heidegger's prospective conception of existence: man is not circumscribed by his immediate present, but he feels the call of the future with all its tragic urgency. The self is essentially a "project" which perpetually keeps its distance from the crude existent, *Seiende,* to which we have already referred, the completely determined aspect in which man may be thought of as an object. This is the region of the unauthentic life which may be compared with the Indian concept of *samsāra,* the tendency to be absorbed in the world of "dailiness," the world of *petit bourgeois* care and preoccupation and indifference. Heidegger calls it, as we have seen, the world of the impersonal-theyself where knowledge is only a semblance of it, *ābhāsa,* a standardized reflection: in brief —*avidyā*. Heidegger says that this is the common state of existence, the very possibility of transcending which does not strike most people. Man models himself on things until he comes to consider himself only a thing among things. Social life and gossip reduce each being to the level of the distracted talk which is supposed to represent his personality.

This is the world completely dominated by "function" (*karma*), described by Gabriel Marcel, in which man has lost his feeling for the mystery of being, the world brought under the fictitious category of the

"purely natural" so dear to empiricists. It is also the world of the "other" which haunts the imagination of Sartre like a nightmare, contact with which repels him violently and gives him nausea (*La Nausée,* p. 25), the ontological horror experienced as the result of contact with what is variously dubbed "the past," "other people," and "the world." This idea of unclean attachment, of filthy stickiness, strongly reminds one of the Indian concept of *lepa or kasāya.* Authentic existence is freedom from such attachment, for Sartre as it is for the Vedantic seeker.

Authentic existence has been depicted by each Existentialist thinker in his own way, each valid from his own standpoint: *edam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti.* Some of these descriptions are paradoxically worded, as in the Upanishads for example, owing undoubtedly to the inadequacy of language itself as an instrument for dealing with the central experience of existence which one indubitably has but cannot fully comprehend. It can only be presented in a negative guise: witness the *neti, neti,* of the Upanishads. It is for this reason that Kierkegaard speaks of the existent, abandoning his passion for knowledge in favor of the sustaining passion for non-knowledge. The significance of such a paradox lies in the fact that a negation is often the most positive form of affirmation of the contrary. Every expression of existence deriving from the ineffable state is therefore necessarily ambiguous in form. Thus, as the *Kena Upanishad* (11) puts it:—

It is conceived of by him, by whom it is not conceived of. He by whom it is conceived of, knows it not. It is not under-

stood by those who understand it. It is understood by those who understand it not.

(*Yasyamatam tasya matam, matam yasya na veda sah; avijnātam vijnatām avijānatam.*)

Again, Jaspers's distinction between the philosophies of the daytime and the nighttime recalls to mind the dictum of the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* although the correspondence is more with regard to form than to substance: "In what is darkness to the ordinary man, the seeker is awake. That which is broad daylight to the man of the world is like night to the seer." (II. 69) Kierkegaard's description of the complicated connection between the Existentialist attitude and the problems of action is also reminiscent of the *Gītā.* Says Kierkegaard: "The true concrete choice [which for him is the core of action] is that by which, at the very moment when I choose to renounce the world, I choose also to return to the world." We may compare this with the cryptic statement of the *Gītā* (IV. 18): "He is a wise man who perceives inaction in action and action in inaction."

This ambivalence it is that constitutes the mystery of being which Marcel has dwelt upon so frequently. Responsiveness towards such a reality is what has been called faith by the Christian Existentialists. The wonder which the experience evokes is acceptable to non-Christian Existentialists also. Thus Jaspers has said that the existential anguish is a prerequisite to the discovery of being which is ultimately a mystery and can only be experienced as "wonder." The man without wonder is the non-existent man. There is here an obvious analogy to an Indian attitude. The word *āścarya*

is used in this connection in the Upanishads and the idea is echoed by the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (II. 29), *Āścarya-vat paśyati,* etc. The mystery is stressed repeatedly in the *Gītā* as well as the Upanishads which speak of existence as *guhya* and again as *rahasya.* As a matter of fact, the word *upanishad* itself stands for *rahasya* or mystery. We also find it said repeatedly that reality does not lend itself to systematic representation, an idea entirely acceptable to the Existentialists.

At first sight, it might appear that the characterization, "wonder" may not be applicable to the attitudes of the avowedly Atheist thinkers like Heidegger and Sartre. Yet, on closer scrutiny, the experience would seem to be identical but received in different moods. In a mood of acceptance, Pascal exclaims, "It is incomprehensible that everything should be incomprehensible." A mere change of mood makes Heidegger and Sartre speak of existence as complete irrationality, an absurdity incapable of any explanation. Yet this Atheism is far removed from the Positivism of Comte a hundred years ago, or of Bertrand Russell today. Here we are on the verge of a faith which was long ago formulated by Tertullian as "*Credo quia absurdum*"; only they stop at the *absurdum,* and the *credo* is not yet explicit. The difference between the Christian and Atheistic Existentialists appears to be more in terminology than in substance.

Before we finish this topic of direction, we should do well to bear in mind the ambivalence of the idea. We have seen this already in Kierkegaard's concept of inwardness. He held that in order to maintain our in-

wardness, we must abandon pure inwardness. In his view there is a subjectiveness which is really the most complete objectiveness. In the words of Theodor Haecker, "He wishes to go from the person, over the things to the person and not from things over the person to the things." The idea is not far removed from that of the Upanishads and the *Gītā* which speak of the realization of the existence of *sarva bhūtesu cātmānam, sarva bhūtāni cātmani,* which is also to be seen as the root of Sartre's analysis of the experience of the "other" which is indispensable to my knowledge of myself.

III

It is now time to deal with some more specific features. The first to demand our attention is what we may call the initial pessimism, the stress on anguish, forlornness and despair. Kierkegaard thought in terms of anguish. Today, Sartre is saying: "Man is anguish," adding, "Of course, there are many people who are not anxious; but we claim that they are hiding their anxiety, that they are fleeing from it." Forlornness and despair go hand in hand with anguish. Indian thought abounds in so many parallels that it is perhaps unnecessary to cite chapter and verse. Whether in the Vedanta or in Buddhism or elsewhere, at every step we come across expressions of the misery of concrete existence and the awareness of this is the condition precedent to any spiritual realization. That "Sorrow Is" is the first of the four noble truths of the Buddha. It is the mark of the birth of discrimination. As the *Yoga Sūtra* puts it: (II.

15) *Duhkham eva sarvam vivekinah*. Examples need not be multiplied.

We now come to a very important point of difference. Nowhere in the whole range of Indian thought do we come across a wilful preference for continuing in the midst of misery, *duhkham*. The *raison d'être* of philosophy itself is stated to be deep-rooted desire to escape from misery. We do come across deprecation of the quest for pleasures or happiness at the lower level. Thus we learn that the quality of *sattva* binds through the attachment to pleasure: *sukha*. The objective, however, is not *sukha* but *ānanda,* transcendental bliss. It is easy to understand the need for *vairāgya* (dispassion) which envisages the lure of happiness as an obstacle in the pursuit of freedom. Thus we can follow Jaspers when he traces the temptation of happiness through all the guises it puts on to attract us, from economic Utopias to philosophic harmonies. But when he comes to the final conclusion that the quest of freedom can never dispense with definitive antinomies and heart-rendings, it looks to us as if a sick man in his enthusiastic appreciation of the curative rôle of medicine should, with all the force of his being, reject the very idea of health on the score that then there would be no more use for medicine! According to Indian ideas this hugging of anguish, and of death and its implications, can only be explained as a result of the excess of the quality of *rajas* in a certain type of temperament, for, as the *Gītā* puts it: *rajạsastu phalam duhkham*. The charge of attitudinizing has often been levelled against these thinkers. But it would perhaps be fairer to recog-

nize in them the kind of sincerity designated as *rājasic śraddhā* in the *Gītā*. They can be distinguished from the Christian Existentialists by the circumstance that, unlike the latter, they cannot let themselves go in humility and merge in the higher experience embodied in the Christian myth. They are too proud to see that the crucifixion loses all its significance apart from the subsequent resurrection, that the sacrifice of life is justified only with a view to its saving.

Existentialists, as we have seen, hold to a dramatic conception of existence. This is the foremost feature which strikes an observer. Thus, Professor Ayer, an unsympathetic critic, has characterized Existentialism as a dramatization of necessary truths. The close affinity between such a process and that of mythology will at once be obvious. Throughout the ages, mythology has provided an outlet for those fundamental urges of the human soul which overflow the boundaries of the individual psyche and for the expression of which rational language proves inadequate. Yet their expression is essential and any attempt to bottle them up leads to disaster. This is the core of the Existential experience of "anguish." The brilliant investigation of the function of myths in recent times, by Jung and others, has given an altogether new orientation to our approach to the topic. For our purposes here it is sufficient to note that for the solution of the secret of human existence, one branch of Existentialism has gone back to the congenial Christian myth, thus harking back to the mysteries and passion plays of the Middle Ages. In Indian thought the myth plays a very important rôle in philosophic thought,

as may be seen even in the Upanishads. The difference is that, whereas in India there is scope for endless option in the employment of myths, each mode valid in its own way and for a particular temperament, Western thinkers are responsive to only one myth, if to any at all.

The attitude of the Atheist thinkers, however, is curious. Posing as heirs to the secular thought of 18th-century France, they scorn myths and reject them as a "diversion." Sartre himself says: "Man is the being who aspires to be God." And again: "Man is basically a desire to be God." Yet he will not go back to the myth which has served as a tried and time-honored means of living out such overwhelming aspirations and experiences. The result is that these thinkers find that they cannot carry on without continuing to use quasi-Christian terms, like sin, anguish and despair, outside their natural context, linking them on to incomplete mythologies of their own creation, like Heidegger's images of shipwreck and abandonment, Jaspers's philosophies of the day and the night, and Sartre's pictures of nausea and nothingness and of the "other," for example. Lacking deep roots, these new-fangled myths do not satisfy even their own makers for long, much less others, and have given cause for endless misunderstanding. For all their subjectivism, the Existentialists seem bound down to the basic assumption that existence is the object of experience. Yet Heidegger realizes that the Existentialist ontology itself is a creation, a production of the will. He says that a philosopher never sets out to discover his philosophy but to verify it. In other words he starts with an *a priori* "project," an initial

decision to look upon existence in a particular manner, and then proceeds to set forth what he has himself tacitly posited.

IV

This brings us to the somewhat unique Existentialist presentation of Being as "energetic" being, as freedom and spontaneity, analogous to the Indian conception of *Śakti,* the crucialness of which in the Indian scheme is too often lost sight of. For Existentialists, Being is something which never becomes an object. It can only be pictured in terms of a "gushing forth" (*sphurattā*). It is the "fundamental resurgence" (*Ursprùng*), *unmesa,* responsible for all thought and activity, which may be compared with the Upanishadic notion—*Yad vācā nabhyuditam, yena vāg abhyudyate*—that which speech cannot manifest, but from which speech literally upsprings. The essence of being, according to Heidegger as well as Jaspers, is a "bounding leap" (*Aufsprung, Absprung*). This movement it is which they call transcendence, the emergence of a state of super-being right in the midst of the commonplace. Every instant, the existent is spontaneously creating himself, or else he sinks into nothingness. His very instability is bound up with excess of energy. The Existential disquietude is but the sign of over-abundance of being, inability to sustain or contain, which gives birth to anguish. The ontological experience is in the nature of an irruption, an explosive flash like lightning as the *Kena Upanishad* puts it. The accompanying emotion is in its milder form enthusiasm (*en* and *theos*: possessed by a God) and in

its more pronounced form—frenzy. In Nietzsche's phraseology, the Superman is lightning and frenzy.

This concept of energy is by no means a simple one. Inherent in it is an ambivalence, a meeting of contraries which, under the guise of mutual negation, bear each other up. Existentialist thinkers are generally agreed in describing Being as a tension of opposites. Emmanuel Mounier represents Existentialism as oscillating between two poles, the towards-the-within (*nivritti*) and the towards-the-outwards (*pravritti*), the solidarity between which should never be lost sight of. Existentialists speak of the impact between a "creative super-abundance" and a "purifying reflexion"; or again of reconciling the rival claims of "efficacy" and "witness." Underlying all this is a visualization of the fundamentalness of the function of negation. Sartre, for example, who makes the largest indent on this idea, makes out the Existential attitude as "attaching yourself to nothing and being faithful to nothingness, and joyously embracing death or absurdity." That is the extreme limit.

The comparison of these ideas with the Tantric concept of the correlation between *Śiva* and *Śakti* cannot appear illegitimate or far-fetched. *Śiva* and *Śakti* correspond to what the Existentialist terms "witness" and "efficacy," or, in the Sanskrit, to *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*. Between the two there is an indissoluble bond—*avinābhāva sambandha*—the relation of mutual indispensability. Their encounter has been likened to sexual congress (*maithuna*) as well as to a reciprocal onslaught (*samghatta*). This is *Śakti* whose essential function is

negation: *nisedha vyāpāra rupā śaktih,* a negation which ultimately negates itself, thus constituting the most emphatic type of affirmation—OM! Even in the terrific picture of *Kālī* trampling on the prostrate form of *Śiva,* she does not cease to be *Śiva-Śakti,* the spirit of a live freedom triumphing over the bondage to hallowed but lifeless traditional forms, the symbol of liberation depicted as sacrilege, the utter negation of all bondage, even the most consecrated. This could very well reflect the Existential mood of anguish and despair, regarding which Kierkegaard said: "Whoever despairs, finds eternal man." This apparent reversal of accepted values which made the Taṇtras a target for abuse born of misunderstanding has its counterpart also in what has happened to Existentialism in our own day.

The concept of mutual reversal is implied in the dialectic movement itself. On the historical scale, it has played a conspicuous rôle in the East as well as in the West. Every religious or philosophic adventure with any claim to originality has been in some measure an attempt at a reversal, a transvaluation of conventional values, to use Nietzsche's favorite phrase. It would perhaps not be far wrong to say: originality is reversal. Therein lies its stimulating power (*Śakti*). We have seen that "inwardness" itself is a reversal of the normal extraversion of the human mind, in the literal sense. But the idea involves qualitative consequences also. It would be well within our range to examine this further.

In India, the traditional scheme of values of the Vedas has been held sacred. Yet, at a higher level, they are apparently negated by the Vedanta, in the Upani-

shads as well as the *Gītā*. The latter has said: *Traigunya visayā vedā, nistraigunyo bhavā'rjuna;* which in effect means: the scheme of values laid down in the Veda has to be transcended. There is the celebrated image of the *Urdhva-mūlādhassākhā'śvattha* in the *Gītā* which is already found in the *Katha Upanishad*: the sacred tree whose roots are up in heaven but whose branches spread downwards into the world of ordinary experience, *samsāra*. The downward path is *adhogati,* the road to perdition. It is the upward path that the seeker has to tread: *ūrdhvagati,* involving a radical change of direction of interest. He becomes *ūrdhva-retas*. Ultimately, the sacred tree has to be cut down with the sword of non-attachment.

Buddhism in India, and Zoroastrianism outside, arose as reactions against the over-emphasis on certain Vedic values. Similar in spirit, but each with its own distinctive stress, were the *Bhakti* movement and the *Śakti* cult in later Hindu thought. The former sought to introduce an emotional personalism into religion as against the erudite logic-chopping of the scholastic philosophers. The latter applied the idea of reversal in a more thoroughgoing fashion: whatever had been deemed an obstacle in the spiritual path was henceforth to be turned into a stepping-stone; that is the key-note of the Tantra. Woman, who had been regarded as the archenemy of spiritual progress, was henceforth to be regarded as the Supreme Deity. As against the traditional devotee who was compared to an animal bound hand and foot (*paśu*), was the *Vīra Sādhak*a whose courage in defying injunctions and prohibitions was his

chief spiritual asset, a term which incidentally reminds us of Kierkegaard's Knightly Warrior of the Faith. It is not to be thought that the Tantra was making an absolute innovation, for the root idea of a reversal of conventional values had already been embodied for all time in the ancient (*purāna*) myth of Daksa's sacrifice. It was a grand celebration of the accepted values and all the gods had been invited excepting *Śiva.* He alone had been left out, although he was Daksa's son-in-law, on the score that he lived like a beggar in the cemeteries and scorned the conventions: *Sadbhir ācaritah panthā yena stabdhena dūsitah.* Śiva's spouse Sati (*Śakti*) went uninvited and was treated with contumely, because of which she immolated herself on the sacrificial altar. As a result, Śiva was furious and destroyed the sacrifice, scattered the gods and cut off Daksa's head. The moral is obvious.

V

In the West, the advent of Christianity marked a reversal of all the cherished values of the Pagan world. Later there was a partial reinstatement of these neglected ideals of the Pagans in the Renaissance. The Reformation represented a reversal of some of the most fundamental canons of the older Christian faith in the name of a resuscitation of moral values. In its own way, Existentialism today stands for a reversal of values. We saw its beginnings in Pascal's rejection of the Cartesian outlook. In Kierkegaard it was manifest in its most pronounced form, justifying Theodor Haecker's characterization of him as seeking to reverse

the European speculative balance. In the historical perspective, Existentialism looks like a violent form of nausea brought about by the shock which two World Wars gave to the facile doctrine of progress which had thrilled and enthralled the mind of the 19th century. On its positive side, it is being viewed as an effort to reinstate the human personality in the face of its depersonalization by scientific rationalism, a task which conventional religion no longer appears capable of undertaking. Hence, Existentialism, even in its Atheistic guise, is being hailed as a return of the religious element into a world overridden by technique.

It is a highly Existential idea, as cited by Mounier, which Franz Kafka puts forward when he depicts life "as an interminable and exhausting journey, every step of which takes us away from the goal we are aiming at." That is the very thought underlying our image of the *Urdhva-mūla ādhaśśakh āsvattha*. Karl Jaspers makes "reverse" the most vital factor in human experience, and says there is a world of difference between the experience of reverse and Nihilism. Reverse brings positiveness into perspective and it is only "reverse" that can inspire us ultimately to a higher attainment, a conviction fully shared by Sartre. Jaspers does not, however, stop at the idea of "reverse," but goes even further. He prizes an attitude of defiance as a means towards enlightenment; defiance, which by the very violence of its negativeness experiences the true life and pays it the homage of its fury, as explained by Mounier. According to him, it is indifference which is really negation. For a parallel to this, we have to turn

to the Purānas. There we find that Jaya and Vijaya, the doorkeepers and attendants of the Lord Visnu were, on account of a transgression, banished for a time from the divine presence and condemned to human existence. Offered the choice between seven lives full of devotion to God, and three lives of enmity and defiance, although they were great devotees (*bhaktas*), they unhesitatingly preferred the short cut back to their holy estate. It is a similar conception which we encounter in the Tantras when they deliberately advocate forbidden practices in their *sādhanā* on the plea that they speed up realization.

In this context, we may well consider the Existentialist preoccupation with the theme of death; for death is the supreme example of the "reverse," being the reverse of life itself. Heidegger deems death to be man's greatest potentiality and says: "It does not come at the end of my life; it is present in every act of my life, in the very act of my living." Living authentically is living constantly in its presence, for then alone can we attain "freedom in the face of death," and know that death threatens only the empirical existence, but has no grip over transcendental existence.

In India, the formidable problems of life and death have always been recognized as of common origin, and as such amenable only to collective solution or elucidation. Having their root in what Jung has called the "collective unconscious," they are burdens too heavy for the individual consciousness to shoulder. Hence, they were approached through the medium of a live mythology, making use of fluidic representations of the

"archetypes." Explaining the significance and value of these myths, that unusually discerning Orientalist, the late Heinrich Zimmer, said:—

> They have been formed by the more-than-personal innermost collective spirit of the people and have been distilled through generations, and they speak directly to the unconscious whose logic and shapes they follow.

We have already referred to this. Going back to our topic, we find in the *Katha Upanishad* that the young enquirer, Nachiketas, goes to Death (personified as Yama) and seeks to learn from him the innermost secret of existence, for there is indeed no better teacher: *Vaktā cāsya tvādrg anyo na labhyah.* This encounter is described in *Katha Upanishad* in a normal and matter of fact fashion, without the morbidity and charnel-house smell with which Existentialists invest it.

In the Purānas, the great god Śiva is the symbol of the presence of death in the midst of life. The cremation ground is his favorite haunt where he loves to roam, besmeared with ashes, and carrying a skull as his ornament and drinking vessel. He is the terrible Rudra of the Vedas. The name signifies literally "he who weeps" thus implying an ambivalence of suffering. As Kāla, time conceived as Death, he is the end of all creatures: *antaka.* Yet in another aspect he is himself the antithesis of time, *Kālāntaka,* the vanquisher of Death (*viz.,* Yama). He is also the symbol of the life-force, *prāna*, one of the chief manifestations of which is in the sex function. Hence the androgynous image of *Ardhanārīśvara,* and the sacredness with which the phallic symbol, the *linga,* is invested.

In the Tantras, we come across the feminization of the same archetype in Kāli, wearing a garland of skulls and revelling in blood. Tantrics of the Śaiva as well as Śākta sects went far beyond the imaginative contemplation of such images. In their *sādhanā* they had actual recourse to the cremation and burial grounds at times and used all the ghastly associations for a realistic reinforcement of their meditations. Whatever may be the justification for such practices, or their efficacy, it has to be conceded that these men had the courage of their convictions and persisted in carrying them to their logical as well as practical extreme. Existentialists talk a great deal about death and suicide, but the matter stops there. Another noteworthy difference in attitude between them and the Tantrics has also to be pointed out. The Tantric *vīra sādhaka* contemplated death as a cosmic phenomenon, as a deity, while the Existentialist prides himself on thinking of it in terms of a narrowly personal contingency.

VI

After this excursion in the underworld, it is high time for us to return to the world of affairs: *karma bhūmi*! The concept of Being as Energy (*Śakti*) would lead us to expect that the focus of interest could be shifted from the problem of knowledge (epistemology) to that of being (ontology); from preoccupation with the idea of abstract truth to the consideration of the concrete, personal attitude towards what is deemed the truth; from the sphere of speculation to that of activity, or rather concern about activity. That is exactly what

we find. Existentialists prefer to view it as a move from what Kierkegaard called the "aesthetic" to the ethical plane. He said that there should be the least possible difference between being a thinker and being a man. In his figurative language the mind must become flesh; it is not pure thought, nor again ostensible activity that is the essence of man, but the will. The common feature of all the diverse lines of Existential thought is agreement about the predominance of the will to be free over the state of anxiety concerning objective organization. The will is not pictured here as a dull, opaque and insistent urge, but rather in its nascent form, as the knife-edge of choice, the moment of decision.

There is a measure of correspondence between this and the *Śākta* position. *Śakti* has three aspects, *icchā, jnāna* and *kriyā,* roughly: will, thought and activity. Amongst these, the stress is on the *icchā śakti,* for that is prior to the functioning of both *jnāna* and *kriyā.* These three are interfused like the three *gunas.* It is only according to predominance that specification is made, for none is found in isolation. From this standpoint, the Tantras stress the primacy of the will: *icchā śakti,* will as power or potency. The idea is not comparable with Nietzsche's "Will to Power." It is the root of activity, *kriyā śakti,* which is its manifestation: *vyakti jnāna,* in the ordinary sense of knowledge of an object by a subject, is viewed as bondage. In fact it is the tie between the object and the subject that constitutes bondage. This polarization is itself the work of *icchā śakti,* which is the nexus between the two. It is the urge of freedom which lies behind decision: *samkalpa.* It is

this urge, or surge, which is responsible for bondage as well as liberation: *bandha* as also *moksa.* This is the bedrock on which the entire superstructure of Indian philosophy is founded, no matter what the differences in language and emphasis. This is the basic idea embodied in the *Gāyatrī,* the celebrated Vedic invocation of that adorable impulsion which stimulates all vital and psychic functioning, and is itself prior to the determinative faculty: *Buddhi.* The *Gītā* expounds the same thing when it says that what lies beyond the *Buddhi* has to be apprehended: *Yo buddheh paratas tu sah,* and again: *Evam buddheh param buddhvā.* All philosophizing is *Buddhi pūrvaka*: determined by the *Buddhi.* The goal is to transcend the *Buddhi.* It is immaterial whether this is called *jnāna* as the Vedantins do, or *icchā* as the Tantrics prefer to name it, in order to distinguish it from that knowledge which is bondage, of which the *Śiva Sūtra* says: *jnānam bandhah.*

That is Kierkegaard's aesthetic plane, in opposition to which he posits the ethical plane, which is the sphere of choice or decision, of Either/Or. It is the region for the exercise of faith. We have already sensed the complexity of what Existentialists mean by choice or decision, whether in Christian or Atheistic terminology. It is a leap of the soul, involving the totality of the being, essentially religious in character, for, as even a highly objective thinker, William James, defined it, religion is ultimately man's total reaction to experience. That Gabriel Marcel, preoccupied with the idea of "presence" should call it "attestation" is no surprise to us. But it is significant that Karl Jaspers, ostensibly disa-

vowing religious bias, should be at a loss to find any word for it other than "invocation." In any case, freedom means freedom of choice for all Existential thinkers, apart from which it is devoid of content. Here is no academic question as to whether the will is free or not, for in the ontological sense the will (*icchā śakti*) *is* freedom. It is the central core of existence.

Certain minor points of correspondence have a more than incidental interest in this context. One is the factor of modesty, to which we have referred before. But its implications for philosophy are more profound than would appear at first sight. Its relation to the Tantric bias towards the feminine aspect of divinity must of course be obvious, for, as Havelock Ellis has shown, modesty is the first characteristic of femininity. From the philosophic angle, modesty stands for the secrecy and inexhaustibility of existence. Dialectically, it represents the initial incompatibility between universality and existence, of which Existentialists have made so much, particularly Kierkegaard, in his rejection of the Hegelian notion of publicness. Existence is, first and foremost, something which will not stand public exposure. That might indeed be the significance of the *Mahābhārata* allegory of the failure of the attempt to disrobe the chaste Draupadi in the public gaze.

Modesty, and the feeling of shame it gives rise to, testify also to that experience of "otherness," the demonstration and analysis of which has been the most noteworthy contribution of Existentialism. It is immaterial whether that presence is, as for Marcel, that of a "Transcendent Power," or merely of the "other

person," as for Sartre. In either case, man is no longer alone in his universe. This feeling of being, unexpectedly and yet without intermission, watched by another who is all the time there, a witness of the most intimate privacy, alters the entire balance of living, and allows for the advent of a feeling of shame, which is the first sign of spiritual awakening, of the return of the ontological sense. Its import is so crucial that "I am ashamed, therefore I exist" might well serve as the *cogito* of a specifically Existential mood. We have seen that for all types of Existential thinking, decision is divine. Kierkegaard thought that it brought the Eternal Will into the region of human experience, and Emmanuel Mounier fancies that a Roman Catholic Kierkegaard might symbolize all human decision as the Fiat of the Virgin, a fiat which makes her the Mother of God, through the direct influence of the Word and without any human agency.

Modesty and shame as evoked by the presence of the "other" in general, have their natural *milieu* in the relation between the sexes. The Purānas as well as the Āgamas utilize this and the relationship of the soul and God, *Jīva* and *Īśvara,* is compared to that of the bride and bridegroom, a form of imagery not unfamiliar to Christian mysticism. The evoking of the feeling of shame must have been the *raison d'être* of the erotic symbolism in which devotional literature abounds, providing scope for the play of the most delicate and exquisite recognition of mutual existence as, *e.g.,* in the *Rās Līlā*.

But ultimately, it is in the self itself that this dichoto-

my occurs, and we come back to the basic concept of *Śiva-Śakti* with which we started. The realization of the presence of a witness—*sākṣi*—in the self has been one of the commonplaces of Indian thought. Thus the Upanishads speak of two birds on the same tree, one of which tastes the sweet and bitter fruit while the other looks on unperturbed, from on high. The *Gītā* mentions two selves in one, as it were, and says, *Uddhared ātmanā'tmānam*: By the Self should the self be uplifted. The idea occurs in *Mānava Dharma Śāstra* also. It is at the root of the theistic approach which has always made much of the I-Thou relationship. This has been illuminatingly expounded in recent times by Martin Buber and other Personalist thinkers whose affinities with Existentialism are very close. Indian parallels could be multiplied, but the temptation must be resisted.

The final reach of Indian thought overflows the bounds of this duality: *Dvaita,* which for it is only penultimate. Non-duality, *Advaita,* is indeed the last word of the Upanishads as well as the Āgamas. Hence the deliberate absence of emphasis on that ethical urgency which is the very mark of all types of dualistic thinking, including Existentialism. It is not that the primacy of ethics: *dharma,* has not been sufficiently appreciated by the Indian mind; on the contrary, it has been its chief obsession—but only up to a point. Then was acutely felt the need for transcending the bondage, *upādhi,* of *dharma* also. Thus Nachiketas beseeches Yama to tell him of that which lies beyond *dharma* and *adharma* and is a release from all pairs of opposites: *dvandvas*. For only when the "other," which is but the

objectification of the self, is merged in the Self, in the supreme realization TAT TVAM ASI (THAT THOU ART), does that freedom manifest itself in which there is no more room for anguish: *Ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ ekatvam anupaśyataḥ*.

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DAGOBERT D. RUNES

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